WARRIORS

FIGHTING MEN AND THEIR UNIFORMS

Martin Windrow

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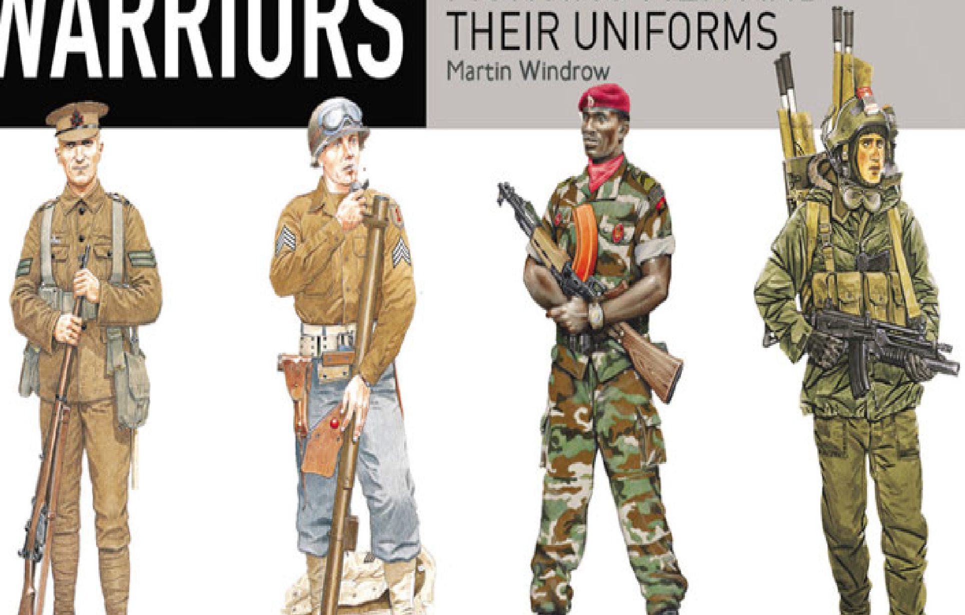

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MARTIN WINDROW

OSPREY
PUBLISHING

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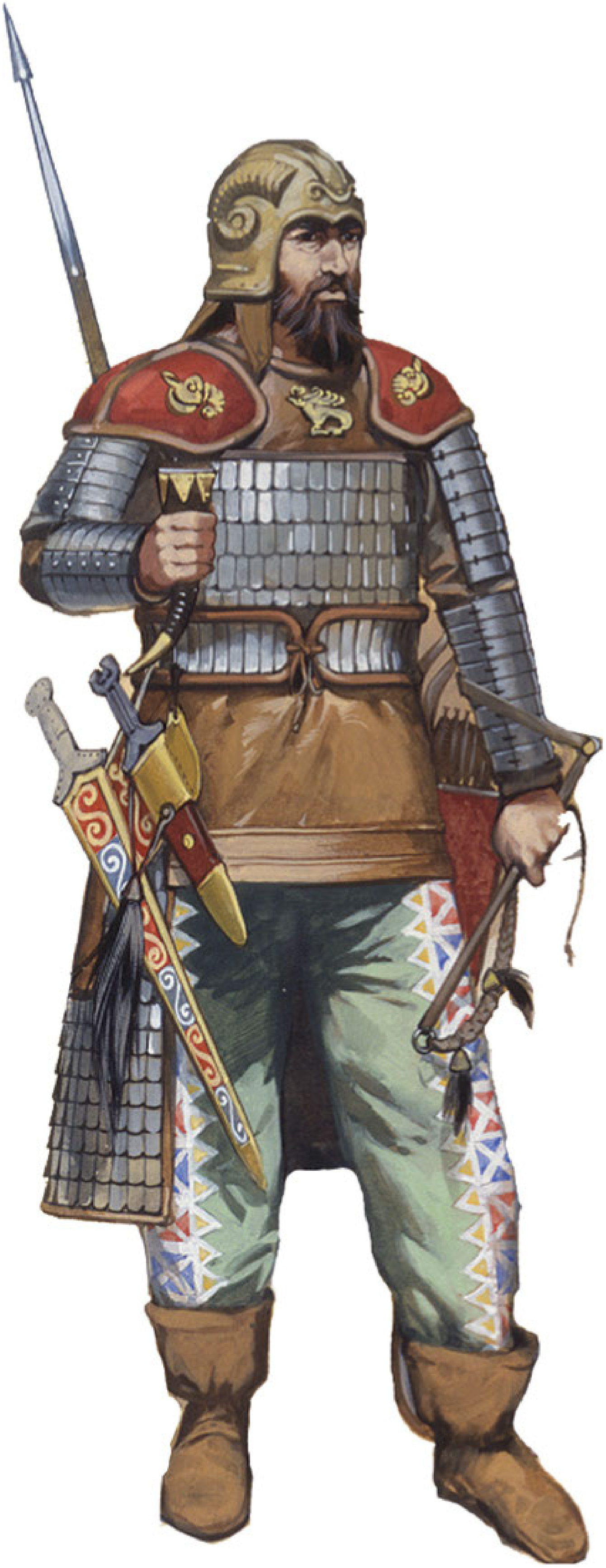
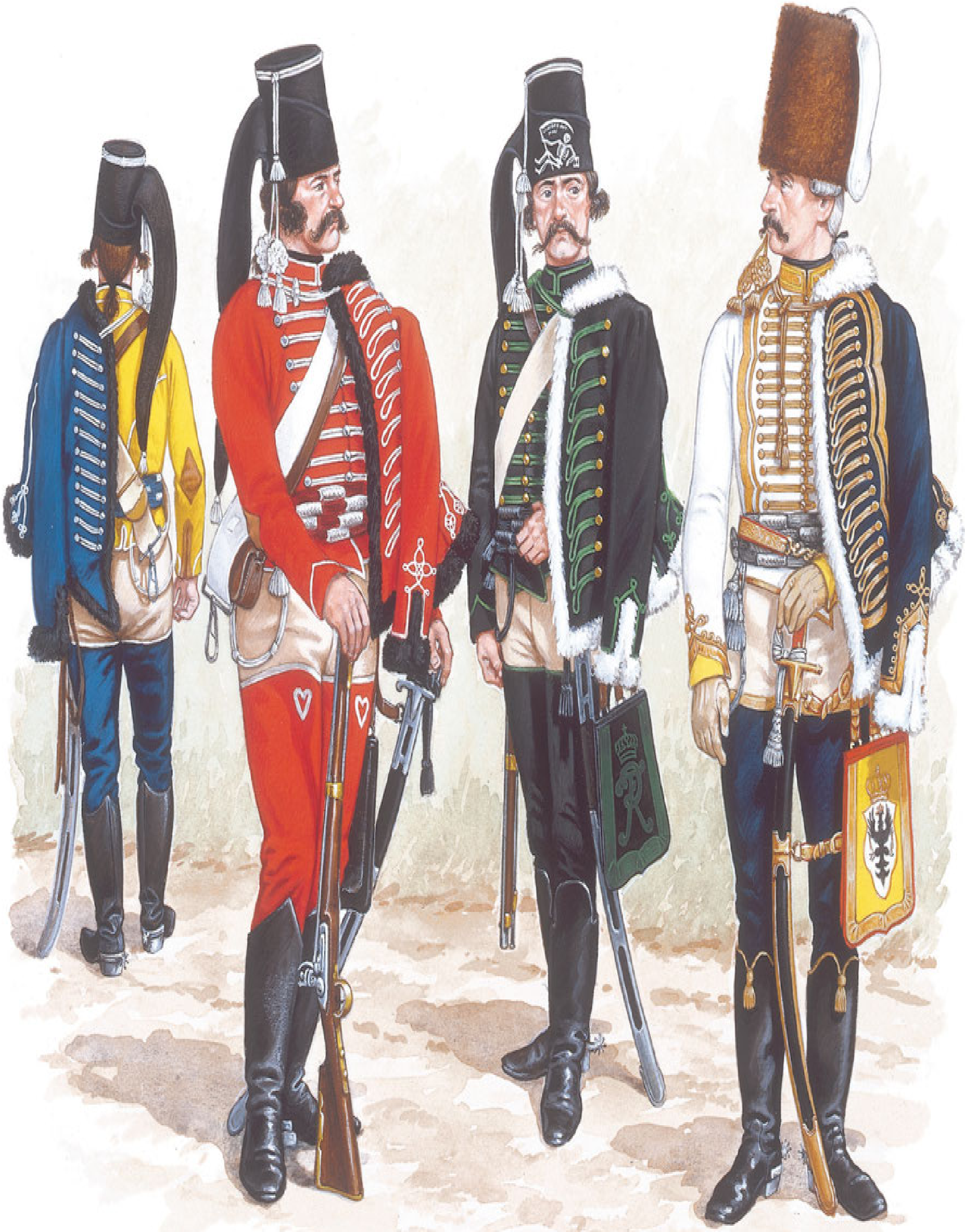


Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 13: The Scythians 700–300 BC, by Dr E V Cernenko.

INTRODUCTION



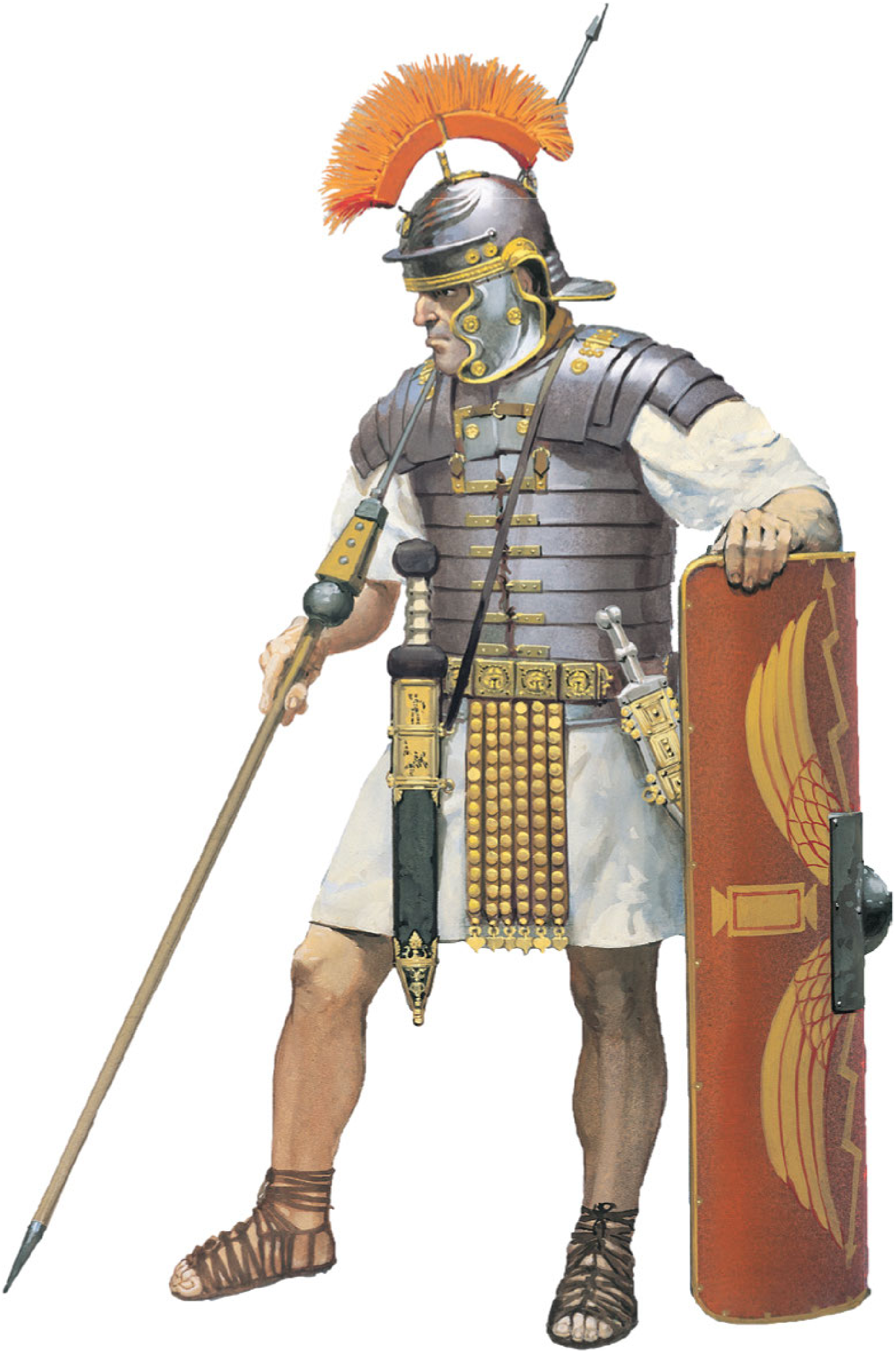
Artwork by Bryan Fosten, from MAA 236: Frederick the Great's Army (1), by Philip Haythornthwaite.

WHAT A SOLDIER WEARS has normally been a practical choice, governed by what weapons he has to face and use, but in many cases martial pride has grown out of practicality. The reason for the birth of true regimental 'uniforms' in the 17th century was essentially practical (central procurement, for a common quality of provision); but wearing similar gear and symbols has always bonded men together, in their own eyes and the enemy's. In the 18th century, when the projected narcissism of monarchs produced an orgy of decoration, practicality struck back in the stripped, cut-down uniforms of light infantry skirmishers and the green clothing of Jäger riflemen but towering bearskin bonnets and decorated buttonholes were still to be seen in battle a hundred years later.

Practicality also has a way of morphing into decoration: the bunches of laces that secured armour, and the cloth tabs that held cross-belts in place, became ornamental shoulder-knots and epaulettes, and the old Hungarian rider's wolfskin cape blossomed into the hussar's corded and fur-trimmed pelisse. The hussar exemplified another trend: adopting the outward finery of admired foreign soldiers, as if to acquire their innate military virtues. In the 19th century, Frenchmen copied Turco-Arab 'zouave' costume – and Americans copied the Frenchmen.

The new long-range weapons of the late 19th century enforced the change to drab uniforms, but the coloured identifying flashes that had to be added during World War I soon became a source of esprit-de-corps. Late World War II brought separate uniforms for barracks and the battlefield, and the camouflage-printed clothing that represents the ultimate in anonymity. Yet today's soldiers still prefer to be seen in public not in their smart service dress, but in the camouflaged 'combats' that unmistakably mark their calling, individuated by their regimental berets. The Roman legionary, so proud of his military weapon-belts, would certainly understand them.

Any selection of just 100 examples from more than 3,000 years of military history is inevitably fairly arbitrary. Those illustrated have been chosen to show broad trends in Western history, with a few examples to illustrate the widely contrasting nature of other cultures.



Artwork by Angus McBride, from WAR 71: Roman Legionary 58 BC–AD 69, by Ross Cowan.

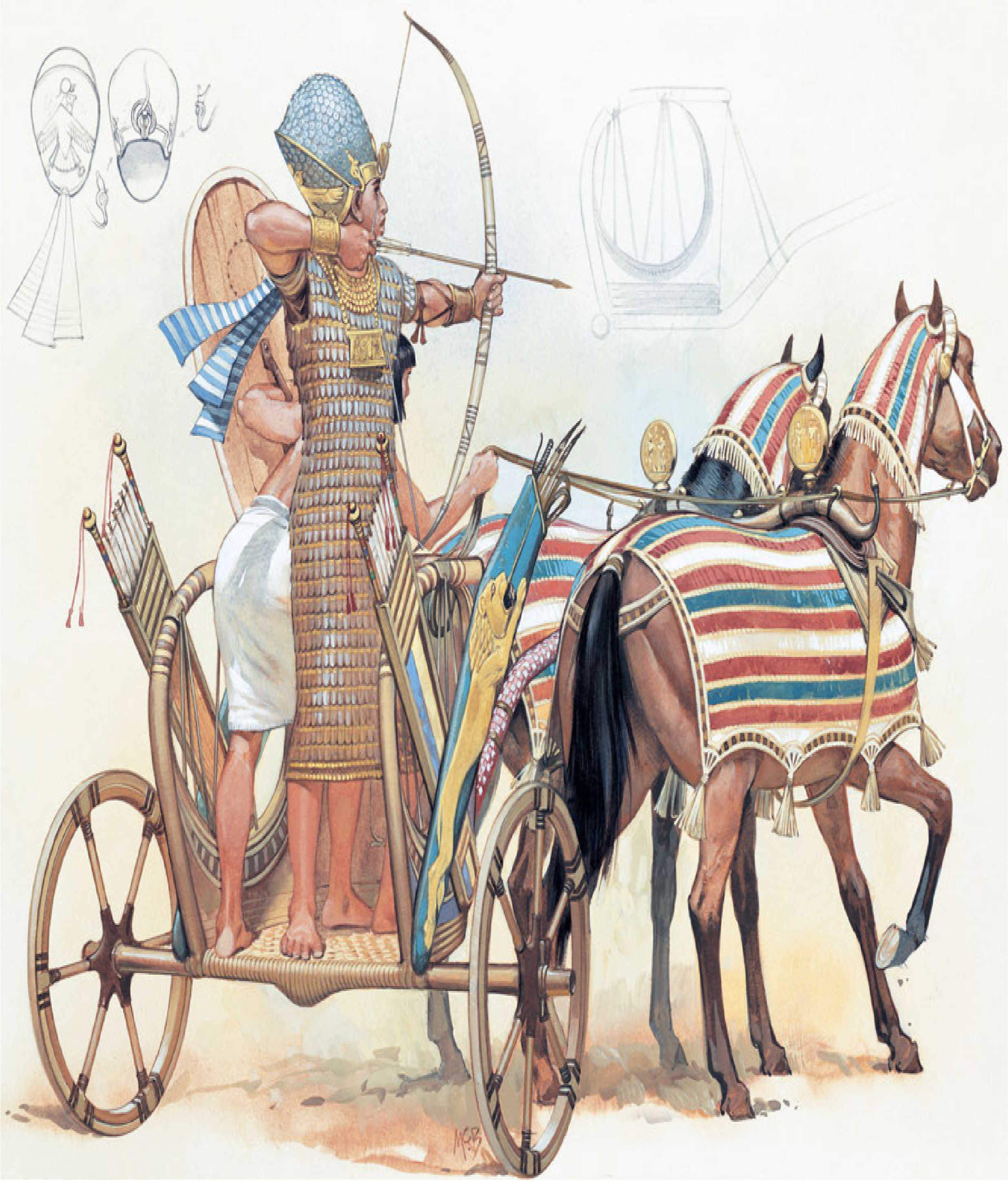
THE ANCIENT WORLD

1300 BC–AD 500

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 360: The Thracians 700 BC–AD 46, by Christopher Webber (top); and MAA 291: Republican Roman Army 200–104 BC, by Nicholas Sekunda (bottom).

WAR CHARIOT OF PHAROAH RAMESES II

1288 BC



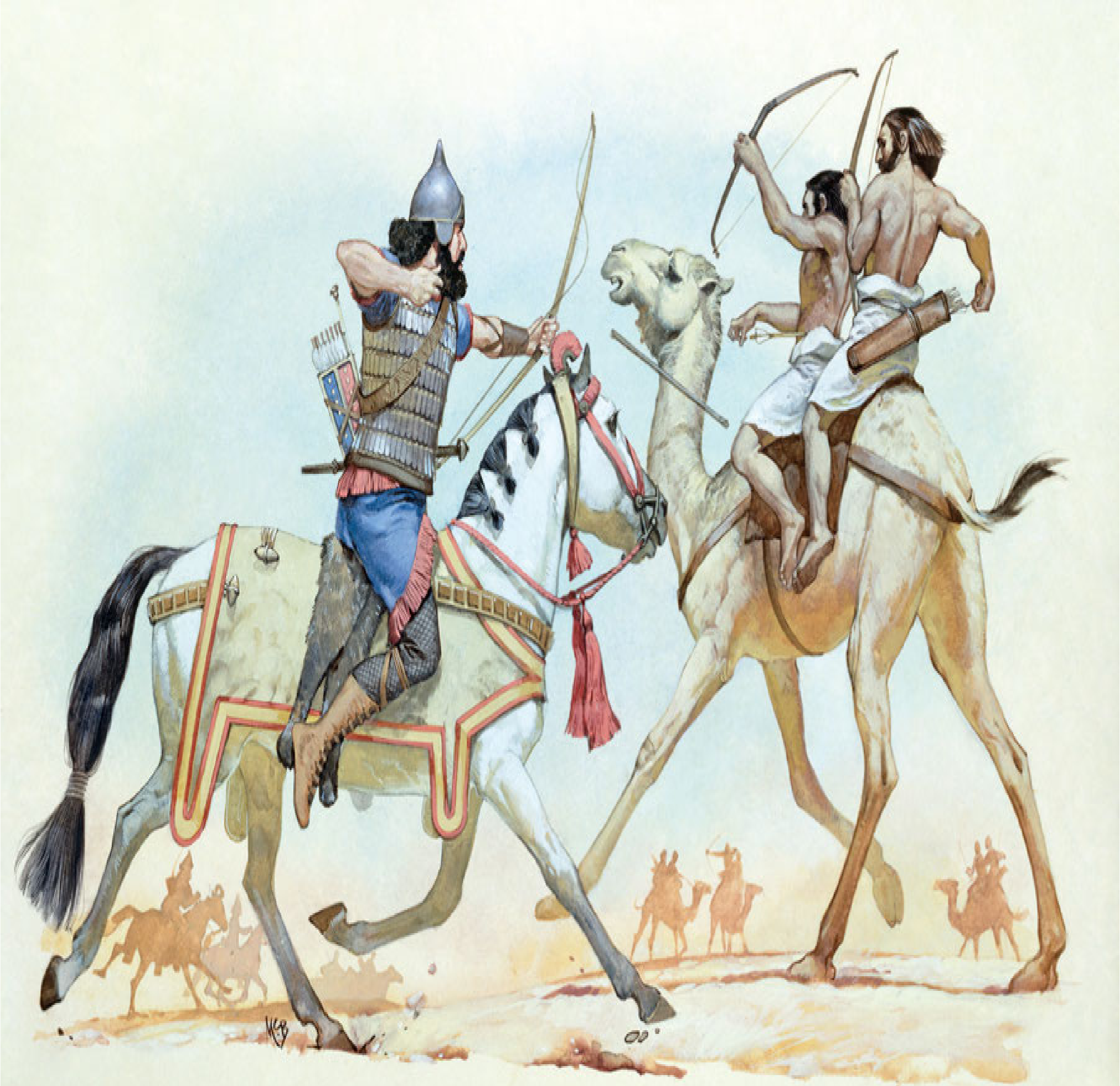
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 109: Ancient Armies of the Middle East, by Terence Wise.

Under the ‘New Kingdom’, beginning in the mid 16th century BC, Bronze Age Egypt already had a sophisticated military system. This was based on a rotation of regional contingents to a standing army, supported by reservists, and equipped by central arsenals. Infantry units of common sizes, led by various officer ranks, were formed of spearmen, archers and slingers. The heavy-infantry spearmen fought in disciplined ranks and files, protected by padded cotton body-armour and wooden or wickerwork shields. In addition to spears they carried bronze hatchets or short swords for close fighting.

We base this painting on a depiction of Rameses II charging against the Hittites at Kadesh – the first major pitched battle which history records. By the 13th century BC, war chariots formed an important corps within the army; the archers they carried tried to weaken enemy infantry formations at the start of a battle, and enemy chariots tried to thwart them. This initial clash of opposing chariots became ever more important, and the fact that the pharoah himself is shown fighting in this way emphasises the elite status of the chariot arm. The long body-armour of overlapping bronze scales was very time-consuming to construct, and therefore very expensive.

ASSYRIAN MOUNTED ARCHER

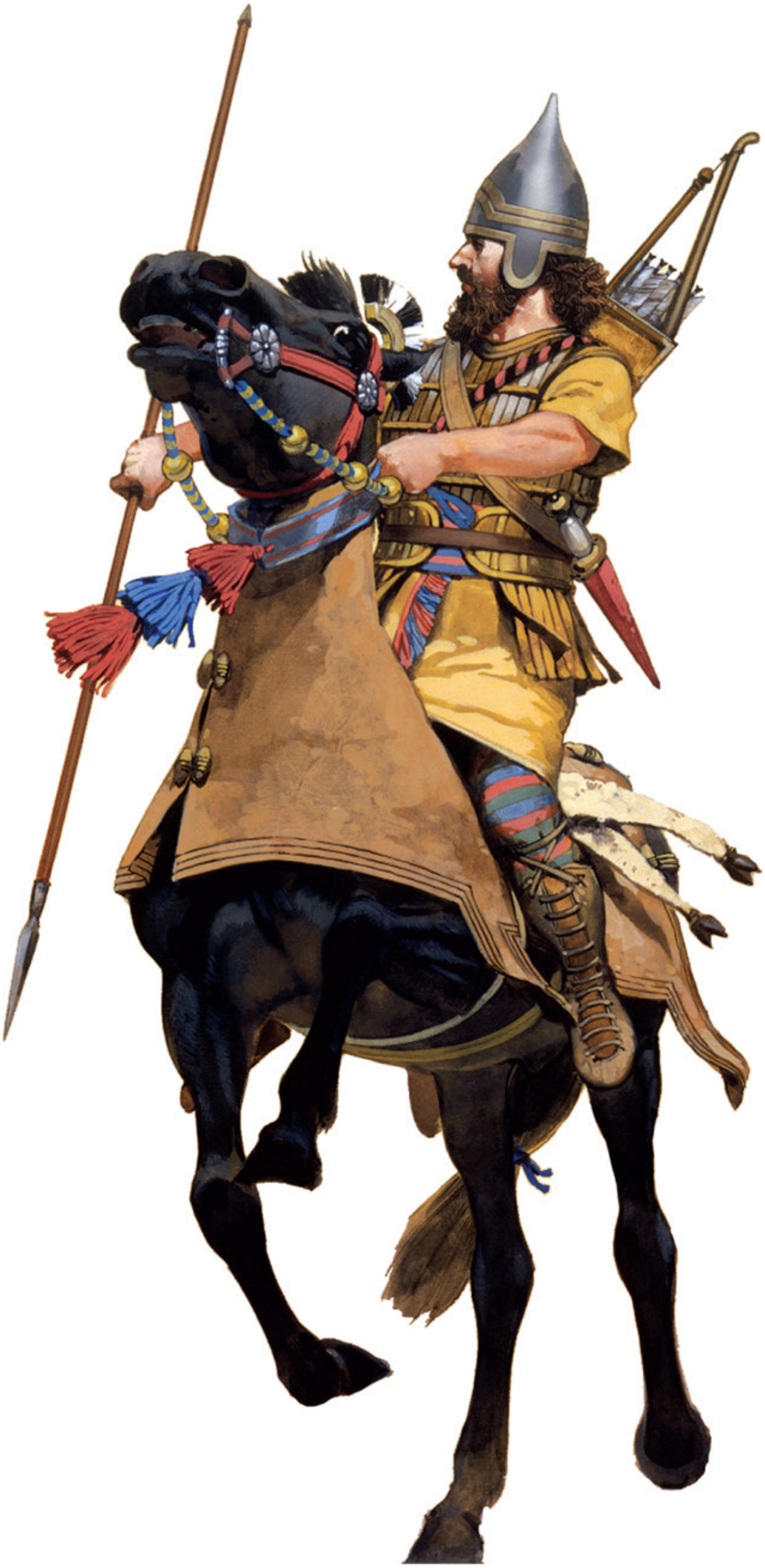
7TH CENTURY BC



Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 109: Ancient Armies of the Middle East, by Terence Wise.

By the late 8th century BC the Assyrians of Mesopotamia were the leading regional power. Expanding ruthlessly, they sacked Babylon in 689 BC, and invaded Egypt in 670 BC. In 612 BC they would finally be defeated in their turn, by the Babylonians and Medes.

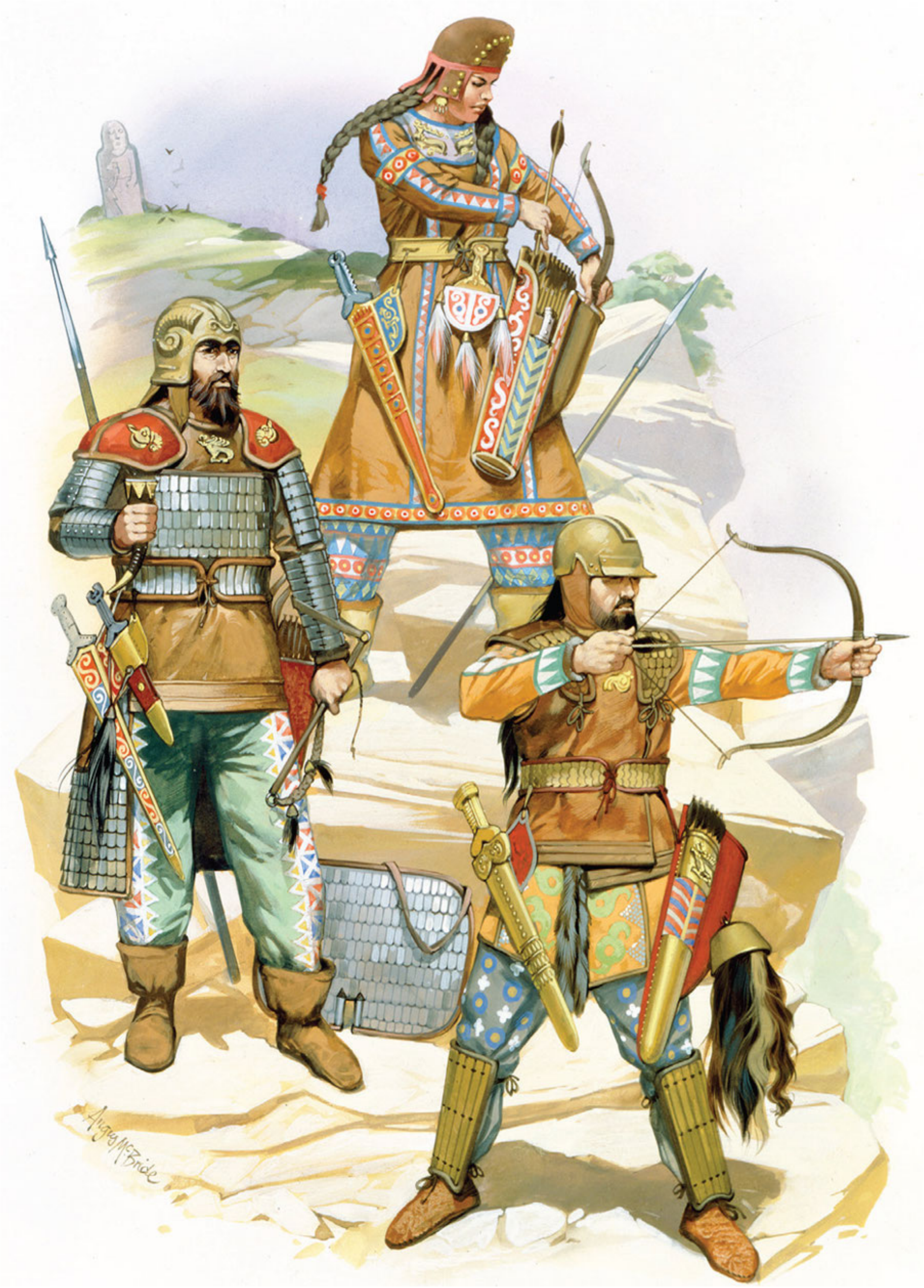
This painting depicts a horse-archer fighting more primitively equipped Arab camel-riders during the reign of the great King Ashurbanipal (668–627 BC). The bulk of the army was always infantry, but it probably had a ratio of about one heavy chariot (now with a three-man crew) and ten cavalrymen (with bows and lances) for every 100 spear-armed footsoldiers. Apart from being highly organized, Assyrian armies enjoyed one other great advantage – mastery of iron, harder and sharper than bronze. By the reign of King Sargon II (721–705 BC) his army was widely equipped with iron weapons and helmets, though the lamellar armour illustrated here (i.e. of metal strips sewn side-by-side and end-to-end on a base garment) is still bronze. The horse-trapping is also probably padded to give some protection against arrows. The horse-archer’s bow is of composite construction – made by fitting and gluing together sections of wood, bone and sinew, which gave superior power and range.



Horse lancer of the Assyrian cavalry, 655 BC. Artwork by Angus McBride, from ELI 39: The Ancient Assyrians, by Mark Healy.

SCYTHIAN NOBLES

5TH CENTURY BC


Angus McBride

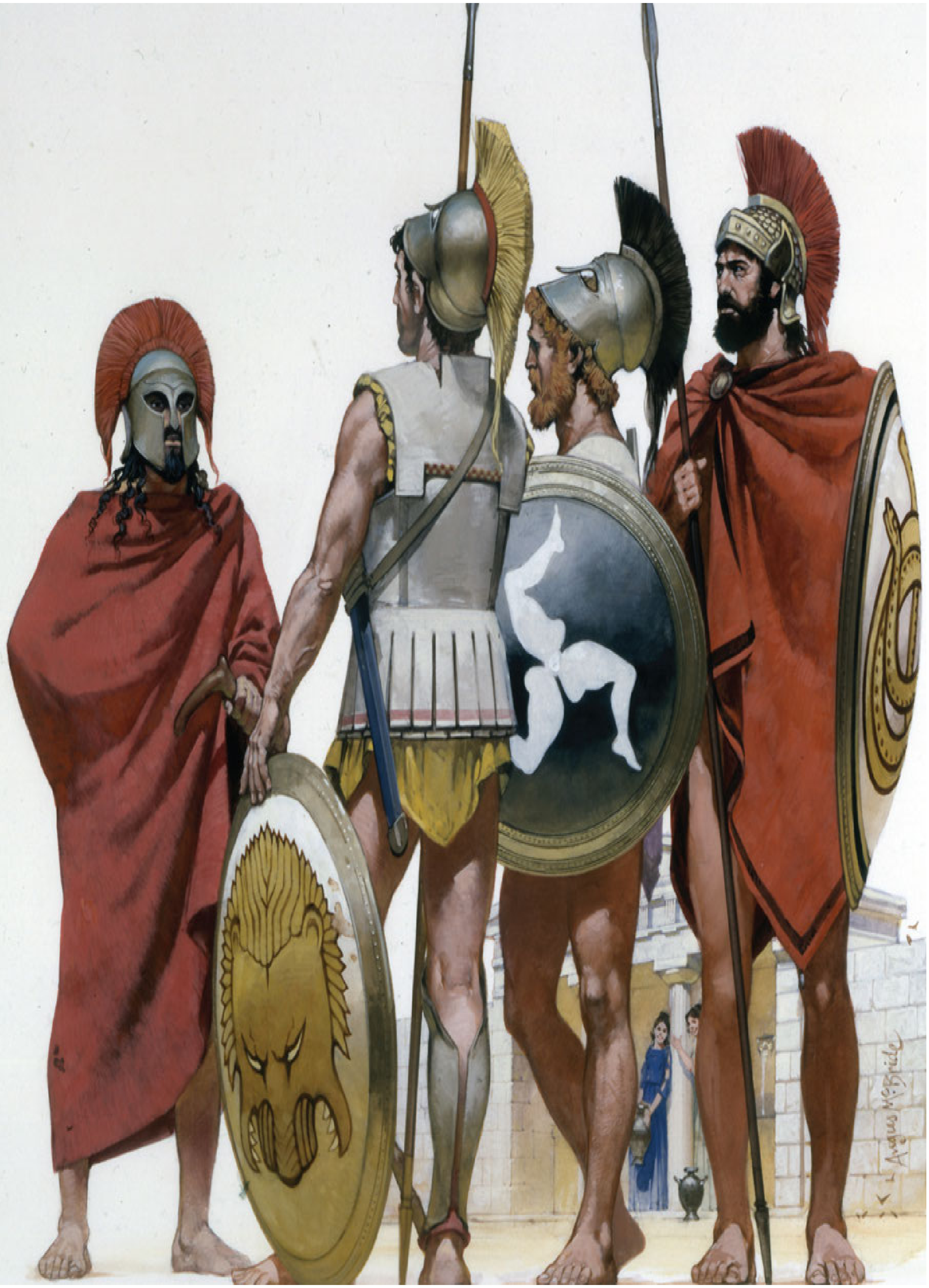
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 137: The Scythians 700–300 BC, by Dr E V Cernenko and Dr M V Gorelik.

The Scythians of the Black Sea steppes of southern Russia are the first of the great nomadic horse-peoples of whom we have any knowledge, being frequently mentioned by ancient sources including Herodotus. During the 7th century BC they crossed the Caucasus to pillage and wage war against the Medes, Assyrians and Egyptians; in the 6th century they fought the Persians; in the 5th century they raided into Thrace, and in the 4th century they fought Alexander's Macedonians.

This painting assembles evidence from warrior graves in the Kuban, Crimea, and Northern Caucasus. Archaeologists have recovered from these grave-barrows skeletons, some organic materials, and an extraordinarily rich legacy of metalwork – not only armour, shield-facings and weapons, but gold figurative work illustrating the Scythians' decorated clothing. Apart from acquired Greek helmets, sometimes radically reworked, warrior graves preserve much bronze and iron scale or lamellar armour of a quite distinct style. Other finds include spearheads, swords, and combined bowcase/quivers for short composite bows and arrows. Several women's graves, while containing no armour, preserve swords and archery equipment alongside more feminine items – thus tantalisingly recalling ancient legends of the 'Amazons'.

GREEK HOPLITES

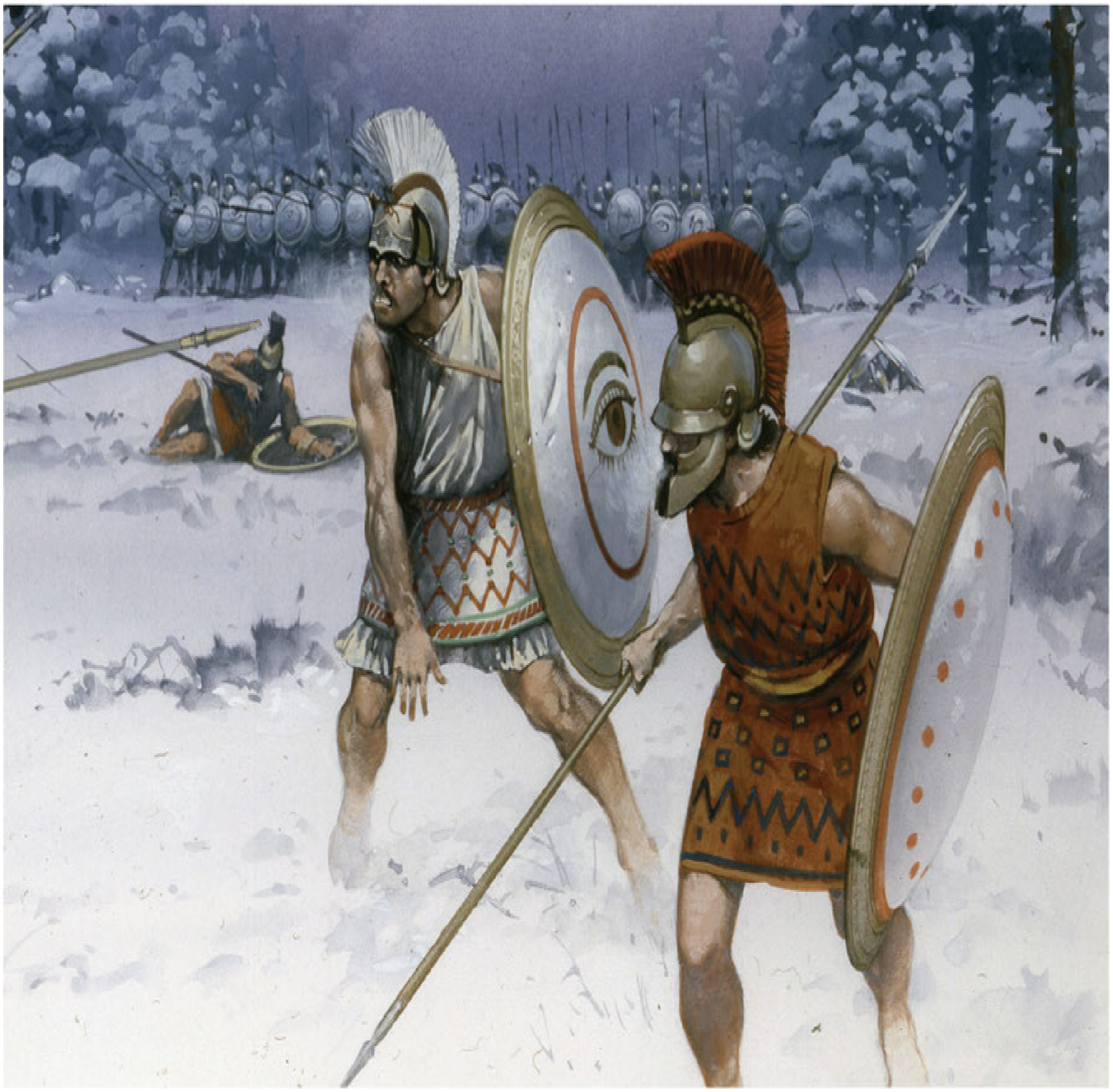
5TH CENTURY BC


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from ELI 7: The Ancient Greeks, by Nicholas Sekunda.

These warriors from the Greek Classical age are reconstructed from the evidence of sophisticated vase-paintings, coin designs, statuary, and actual archaeological finds. The hoplites were citizen warriors of the city-states, who fought shoulder-to-shoulder in the close infantry formation known as the phalanx, armed with heavy stabbing-spears and short swords.

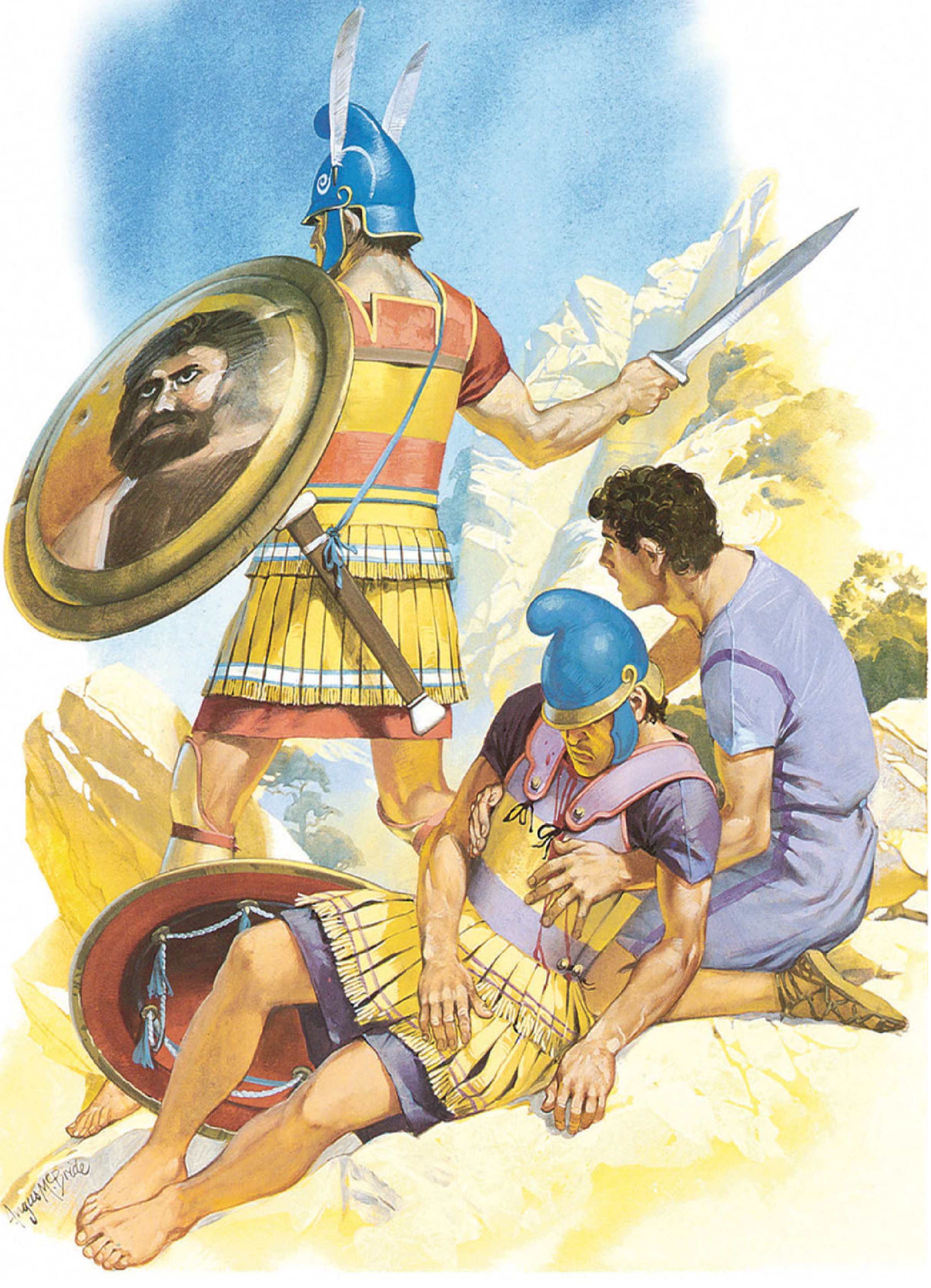
Their main protection was a bronze helmet shaped to allow good vision, and a circular wooden shield thinly faced with bronze. The elaborately embossed helmet (right), of the type termed Chalcidian, has hinged cheek-guards. All the others are of the one-piece Corinthian style – striking in appearance, but so restrictive that it was worn pushed up and back when not in battle. The Lakedemonian (Spartan) warrior is distinguished by his long hair and red cloak (left), the cross-wise crest probably being a mark of rank. The lion-scalp shield blazon identifies a Samian hoplite. His typical cuirass is made of many layers of linen glued together, with two layers of divided strips hanging below the waist for ease of movement; he also wears springy bronze greaves around his lower legs. The three-legged blazon marks the third hoplite as belonging to the Alkmaionid clan, a powerful Athenian group of some 700 families.



Greek ekdromoi mobile infantry, 440s BC.

ALEXANDER’S FOOT COMPANIONS

4TH CENTURY BC


Angus McBride

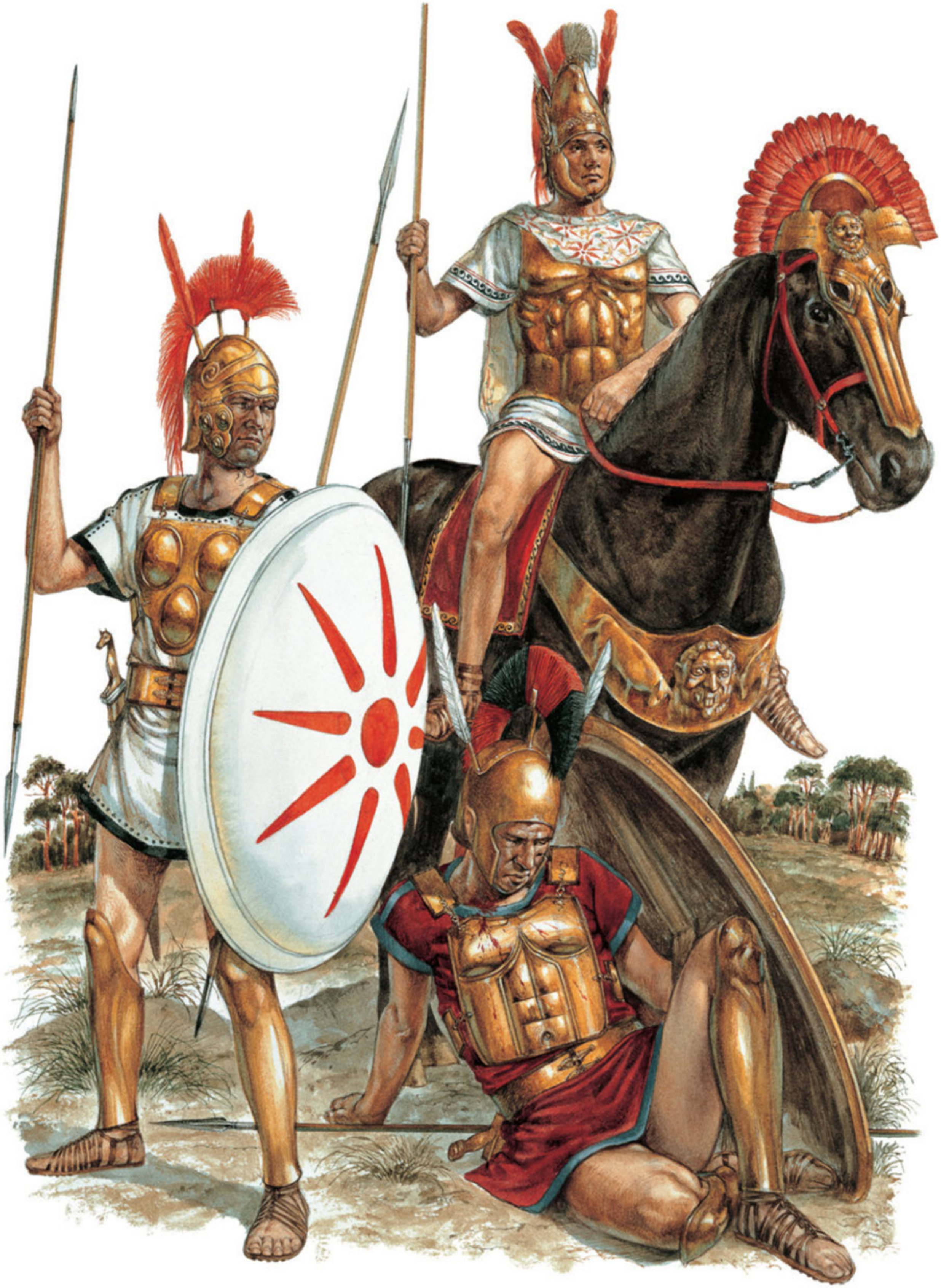
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 148: The Army of Alexander the Great, by Nicholas Sekunda.

In the 4th century the Greek city-states were briefly unified under the rule of two vigorous soldier-kings of Macedonia from the north – Philip II (r. 359–336), and his even more remarkable son Alexander ‘the Great’ (336–323). After consolidating his father’s victories in Greece and the Balkans, this young military genius defeated the mighty Persian empire, then marched his army right across southern Central Asia to Afghanistan and northern India.

Like all ancient armies, Alexander’s included many mercenaries and soldiers from subjected peoples, but the hard core were Macedonian infantry and cavalry – armoured, highly trained and disciplined. Among these the elite regiments were named his ‘Companions’, and historians interpret surviving mosaics and paintings as indicating that categories or units were distinguished by particular colours of tunics and linen cuirasses. The Phrygian-style helmets are often shown as painted blue, and the standing soldier’s plumes, spiral helmet insignia, and single left greave may identify senior rank, as the front man in his file of the phalanx (the left leg was forward when the pike-block met the enemy). He has dropped his long pike and drawn his sword for close combat; his shield is painted with the image of a god. His fallen comrade is being aided by one of the servants who accompanied warriors on campaign.

ITALIAN WARRIORS

4TH CENTURY BC



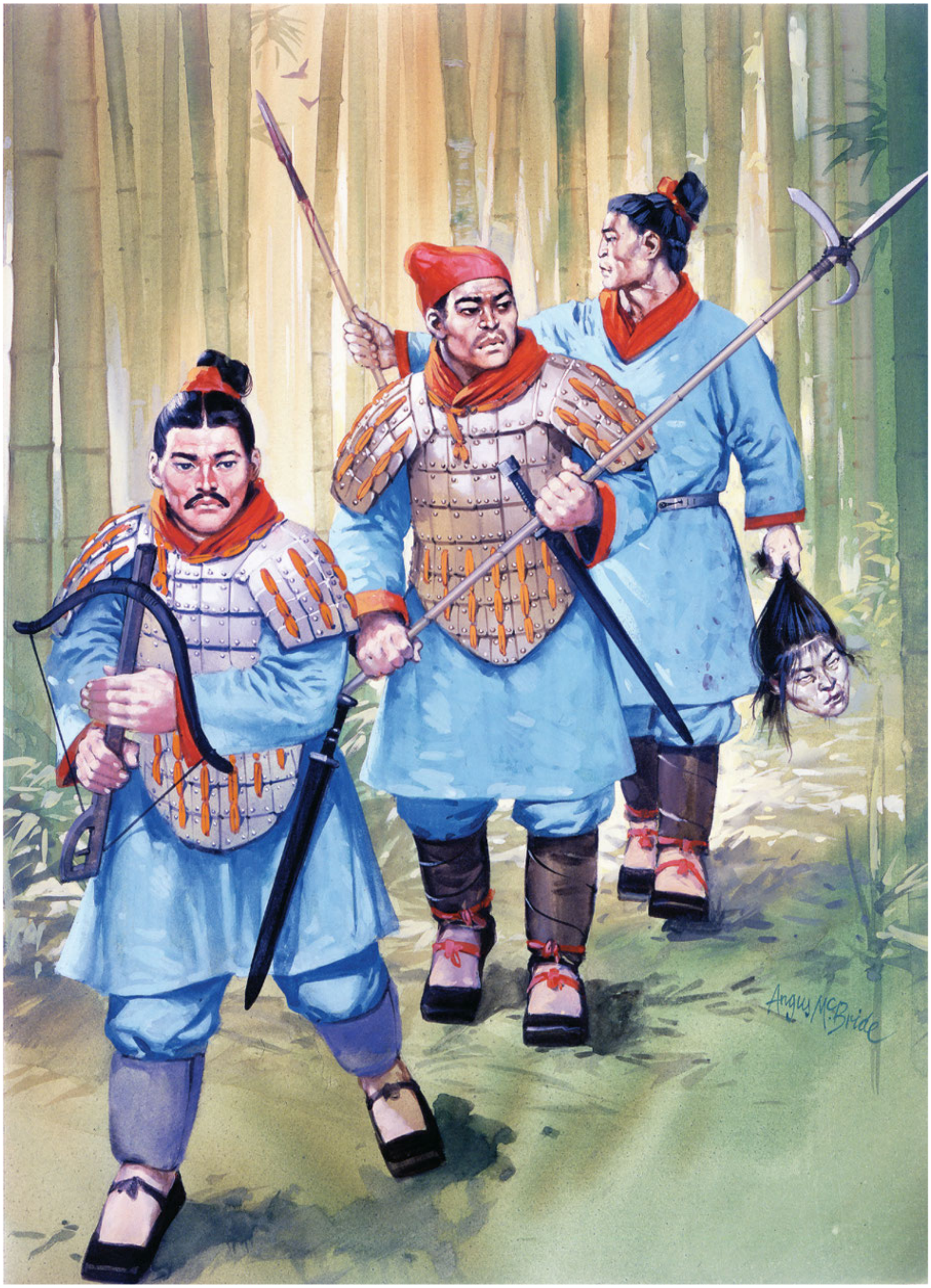
Artwork by Richard Hook, from MAA 121: Armies of the Carthaginian Wars 265–146 BC, by Terence Wise.

While Alexander campaigned in the East, in southern Italy the young city-state of Rome was expanding its influence in wars against neighbouring peoples and confederacies. All had been influenced to varying extents by widespread Greek colonisation and trade, and their war gear can be reconstructed from many archaeological finds and wall-paintings.

Crested and plumed bronze helmets, and large round shields, show a clear Greek legacy. The layered linen cuirass was used, now sometimes reinforced with added metal lames or scales, but from about the 360s BC Greek and Macedonian hoplites also began to wear heavier bronze breast- and back plates linked together at the sides and shoulders. These were shaped like the human torso – the so-called ‘muscle cuirass’, as worn here by a wealthy Campanian horseman. Italian variations were transitional forms shaped as three large discs over the breasts and belly, and as smaller square-shaped armour plates crudely embossed to resemble musculature, as illustrated here worn by Samnite and Lucanian heavy infantrymen respectively. Wall-paintings show warriors with one or two light throwing-spears rather than the heavy stabbing-spear or long pike of the Greeks or Macedonians.

CH’IN IMPERIAL GUARDSMEN

3RD CENTURY BC


Angus McBride

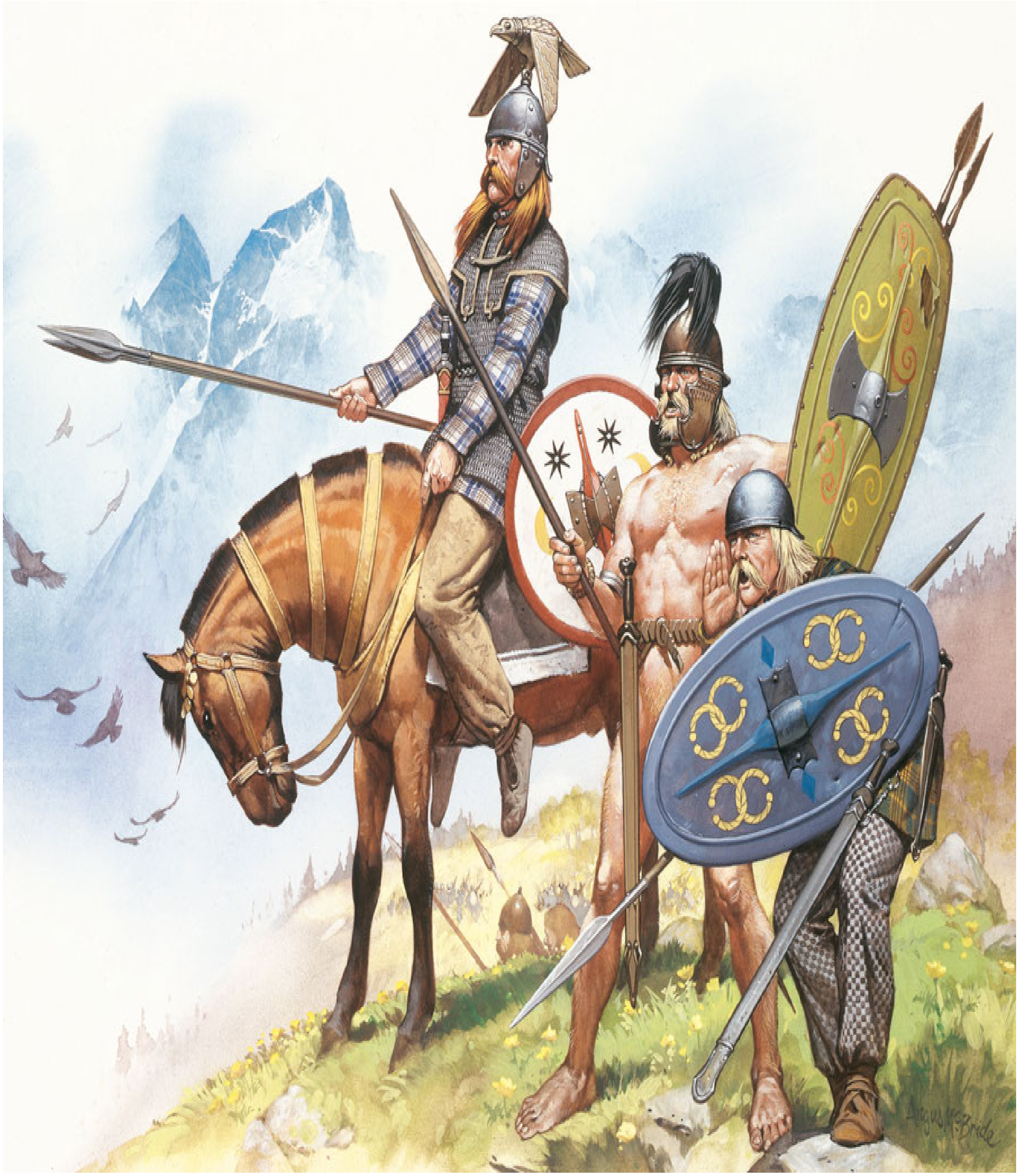
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 218: Ancient Chinese Armies 1500–200 BC, by C J Peers.

Meanwhile, quite independently on the far side of the world, Chinese military culture had been increasing in sophistication since bronze-casting was mastered in about 1500 BC. Warring kingdoms rose and fell over many centuries, as armies of infantry, cavalry and chariots developed organization and tactics for the use of pole-arms, bows and, from the 4th century, crossbows. Finally, in 221 BC, King Cheng of the north-western Ch'in people crushed his last rivals to become the 'First Emperor' of a unified state. (Interestingly, Ch'in soldiers had a reputation for bravery but ill-discipline, and their officers for corruption.)

The tyrannical emperor left a unique gift to historians – the life-size 'Terracotta Army' guarding his vast underground tomb, whose reconstruction is supported by finds of armour and weapons; some of them even retain painted colouring. They are arrayed in units with different weapons (not present, but inferred from hand positions); different styles of laced and riveted scale armour are worn, varying within as well as between particular units. Some brown-painted armour suggests bronze rather than iron even at this date; some Ch'in bronze swords, coated with chrome alloy, were judged superior to contemporary blades of more brittle iron.

GALLIC WARRIORS

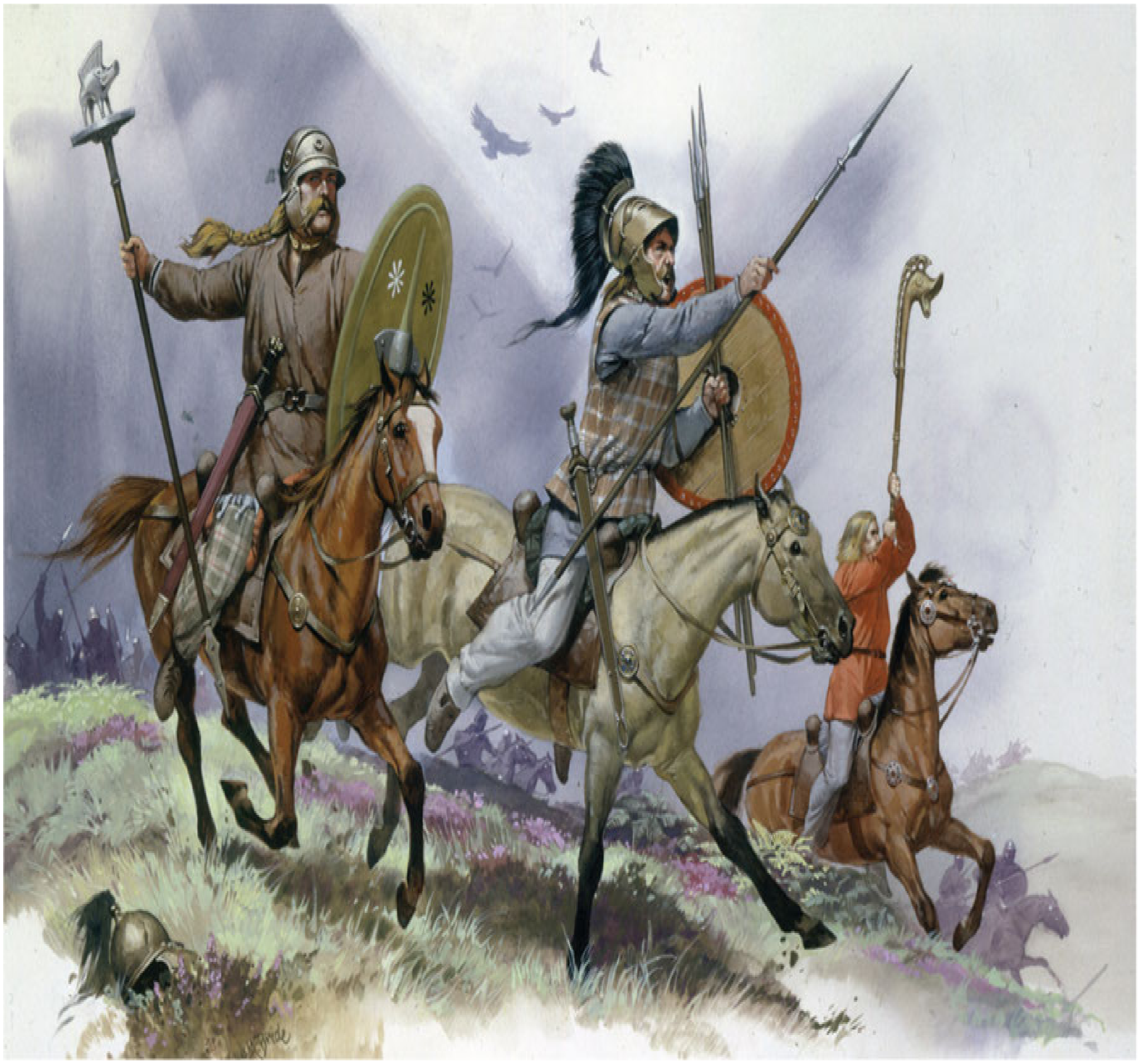
3RD–2ND CENTURIES BC


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 158: Rome’s Enemies (2), by Peter Wilcox.

The Gauls, of modern France, were a branch of the Celtic peoples who spread over much of Europe from a heartland now thought to be in southern Germany. By the 4th century BC these warlike peoples were also sophisticated metal-workers in bronze, iron and gold. Tribes from France crossed the Alps into Italy, and in 390 BC they defeated a Roman army and burned down the city. They later penetrated Spain, the Balkans and even Turkey, and earned renown as fearless mercenaries. They had no written culture, but left the archaeological evidence of their magnificent metalwork, and the statuary and descriptions of Classical witnesses.

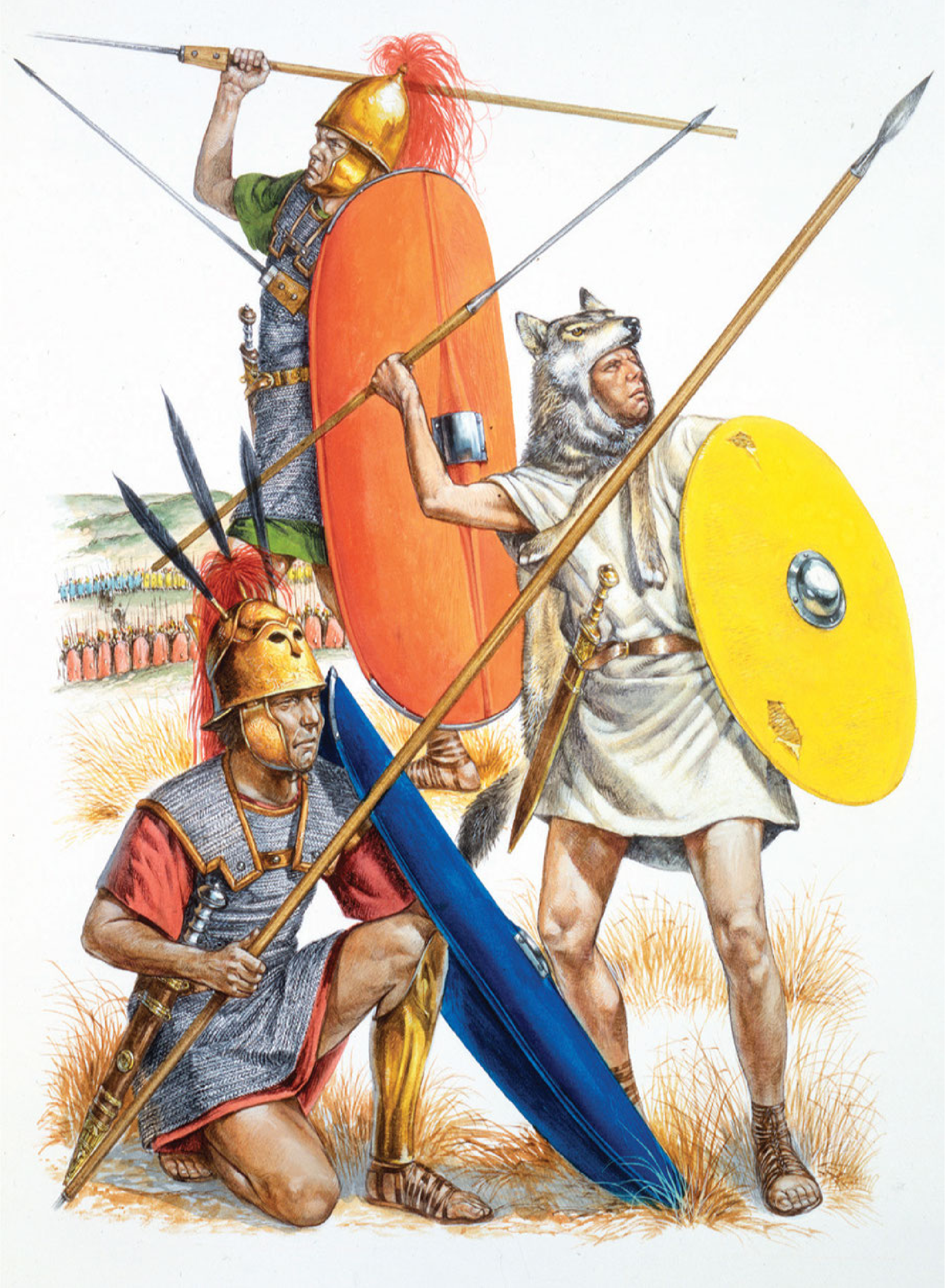
While known for their patterned woven clothing, for cultural reasons Gallic warriors of this Middle La Tène Period often chose to fight naked apart from bronze or iron helmets and linked-ring belts, though the wealthy sported neck-torcs and bracelets of precious metals. Most fought on foot, with heavy spears, javelins, and particularly long iron swords, and carried large shields with reinforcing spines and iron bosses. By the 2nd century the wealthiest were acquiring iron ringmail body-armour with caped doubling at the shoulders, as worn by this horseman. His iron helmet is adorned with a bronze bird crest with hinged, flapping wings.



Gallic cavalrymen of Late La Téne period, 1st century BC.

ROMAN INFANTRY

2ND CENTURY BC



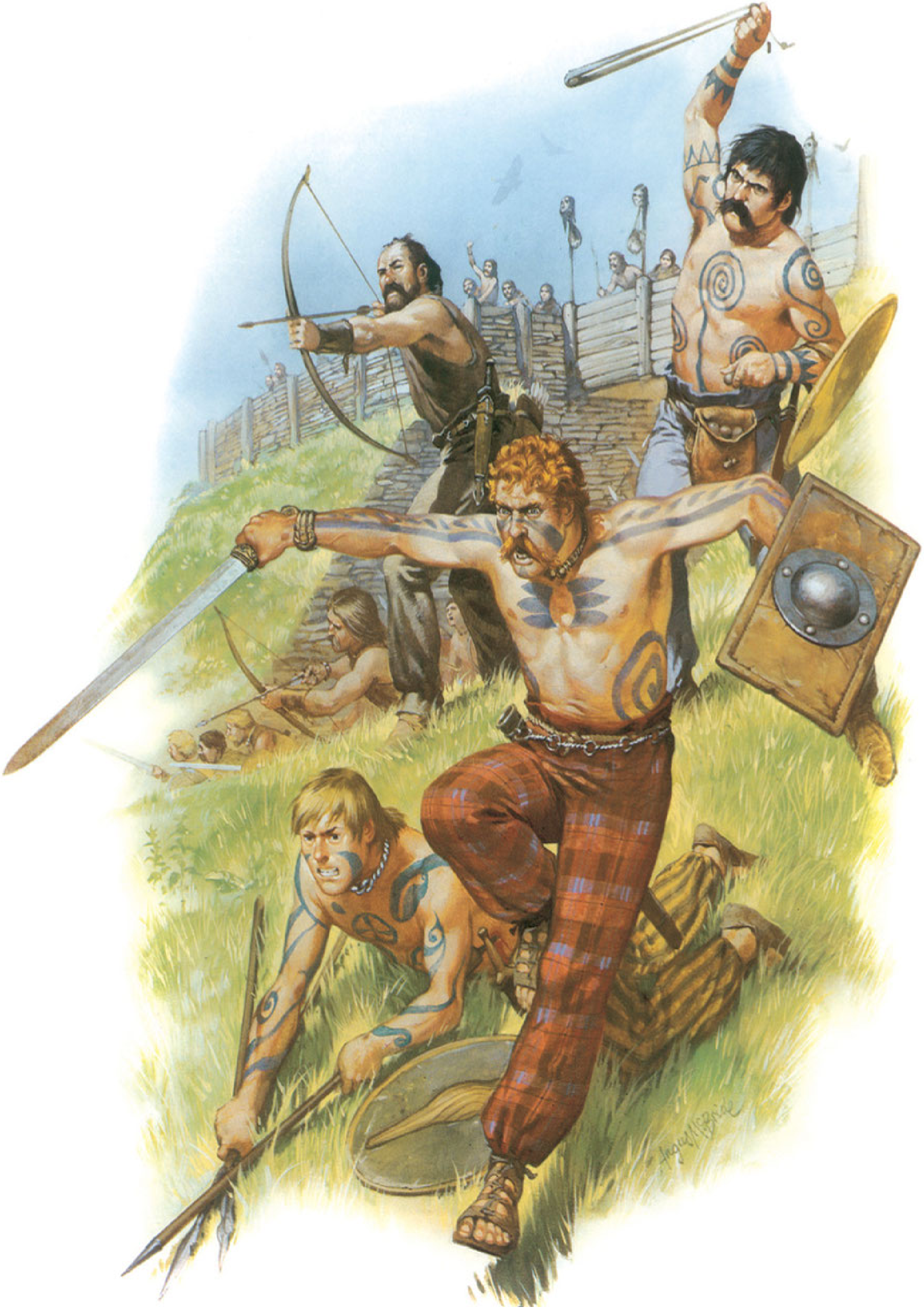
Artwork by Richard Hook, from MAA 121: Armies of the Carthaginian Wars 265–146 BC, by Terence Wise.

By the time of the Punic Wars against Carthage (265–146 BC) the citizen infantry, raised annually by the elected consuls of the Roman Republic, were levied in groups according to age and wealth. Rome had adopted more flexible, linear formation tactics than the deep Macedonian phalanx, so needed different troop types. Since men purchased their arms and armour from state stores, each group had roughly uniform equipment.

The core of the battle line were the hastati and principes who formed the front and second ranks respectively (background figure). In the prime of life, they were armoured with bronze helmets of various styles, and ringmail corselets shaped like the old Greek linen cuirass. They carried long Celtic-style shields, and were each armed with a heavy and a light javelin and a short thrusting-sword. The older triarii (kneeling figure) were veterans; experienced but no longer as agile, they formed the ‘last ditch’ rear rank, similarly armoured but carrying a long stabbing-spear instead of javelins. The poorest men served as velites (right), to skirmish in front of and on the flanks of the battle-line; needing to move fast, they had only a helmet (sometimes adorned with an animal pelt), a lighter shield, a sword and javelins.

CELTIC LIGHT WARRIORS

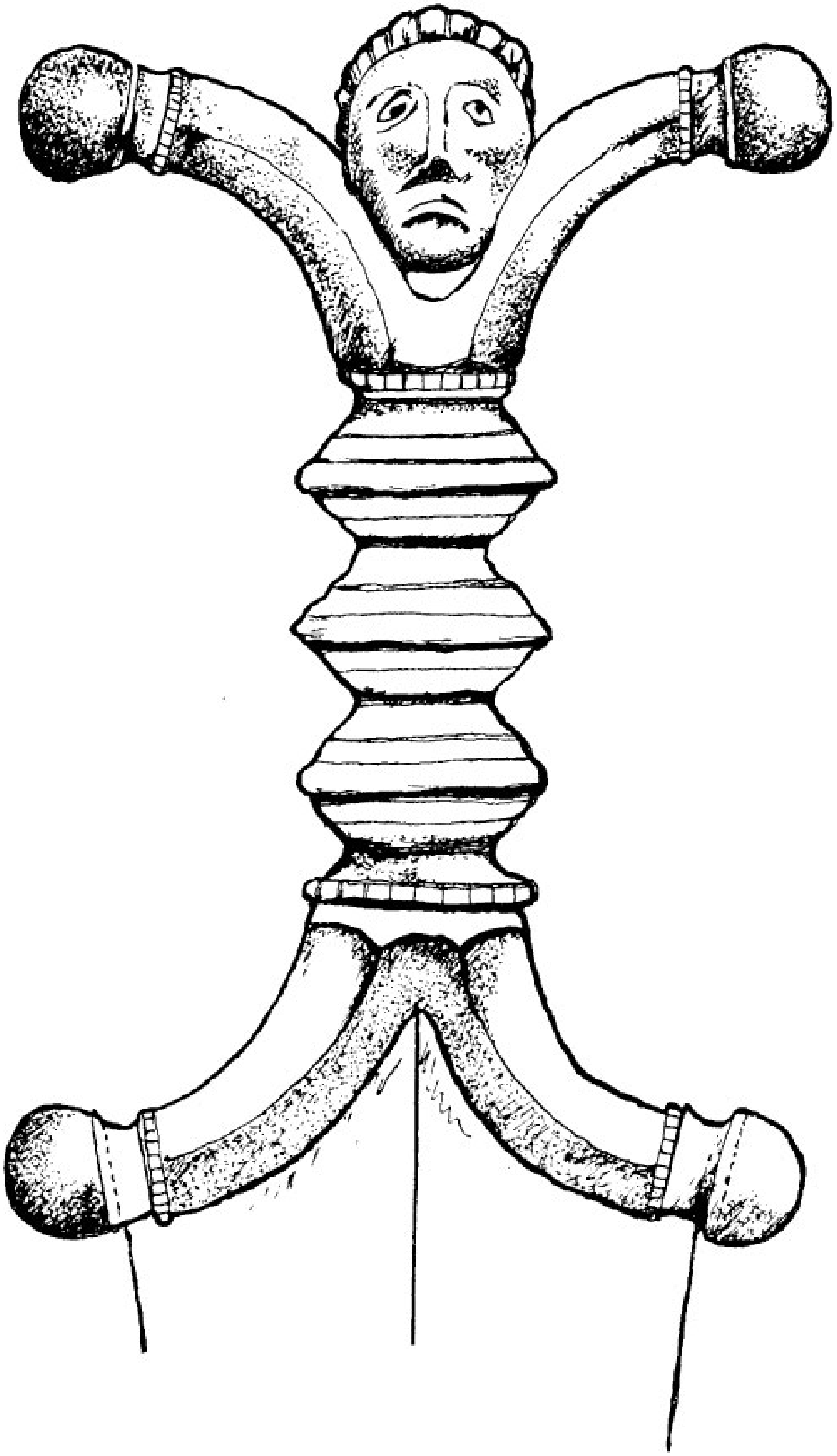
1ST CENTURY BC/1ST CENTURY AD


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 158: Rome’s Enemies (2), by Peter Wilcox.

As Rome extended her empire northwards she was resisted stubbornly by various Celtic peoples in modern Switzerland, France, West Germany, the Low Countries and, finally, Britain. After conquering the Gauls the Romans subjected them to wholesale massacre, and we can only guess at the appearance of the majority who were too poor to own helmets and armour. Reconstructions rely upon Roman descriptions and a few precious finds, including the clothing of preserved contemporary ‘bog bodies’ from Northern Europe.

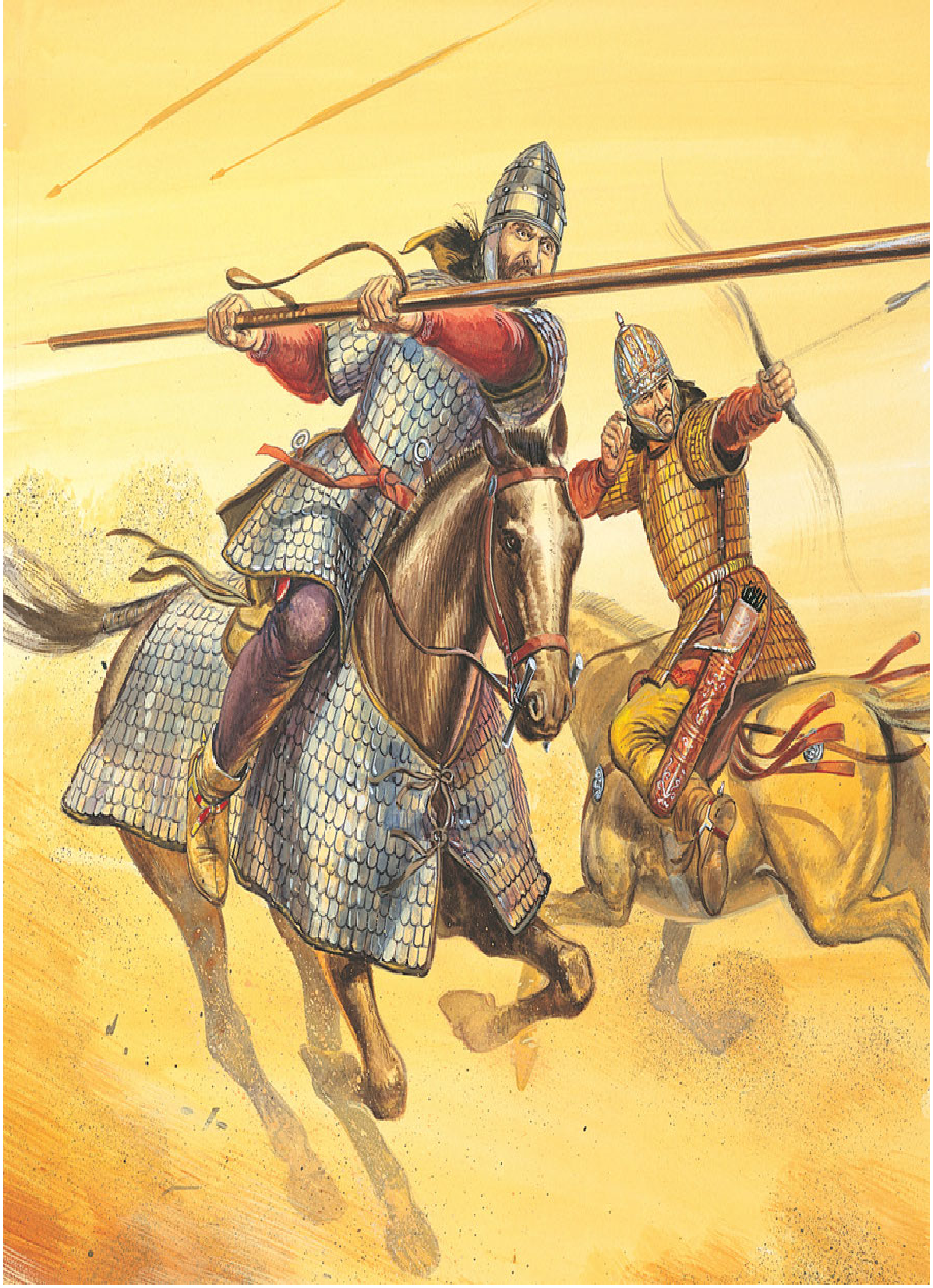
Archaeology confirms that the Celts built impressive hillforts, their massive earth ramparts topped with timber and skilfully-piled dry stone walls. We are told that they were tall, strong, impulsive, and fearless in battle. They favoured clothing woven in checkered patterns; they painted or tattooed their bodies with blue woad; they grew heavy moustaches, and in some cases stiffened their hair with lime-wash. The bowman is from a reference to a Gallic army that suggests that it was not a common weapon. Stockpiles of smooth stones for slingers have been found inside the defences of several hillforts. Caledonian swordsmen in Scotland are described brushing aside Roman missiles with their small wooden shields.



‘Anthropoid’ bronze sword hilt, c.1st century BC, by Peter Wilcox.

SARMATIAN CAVALRY

1ST/2ND CENTURIES AD



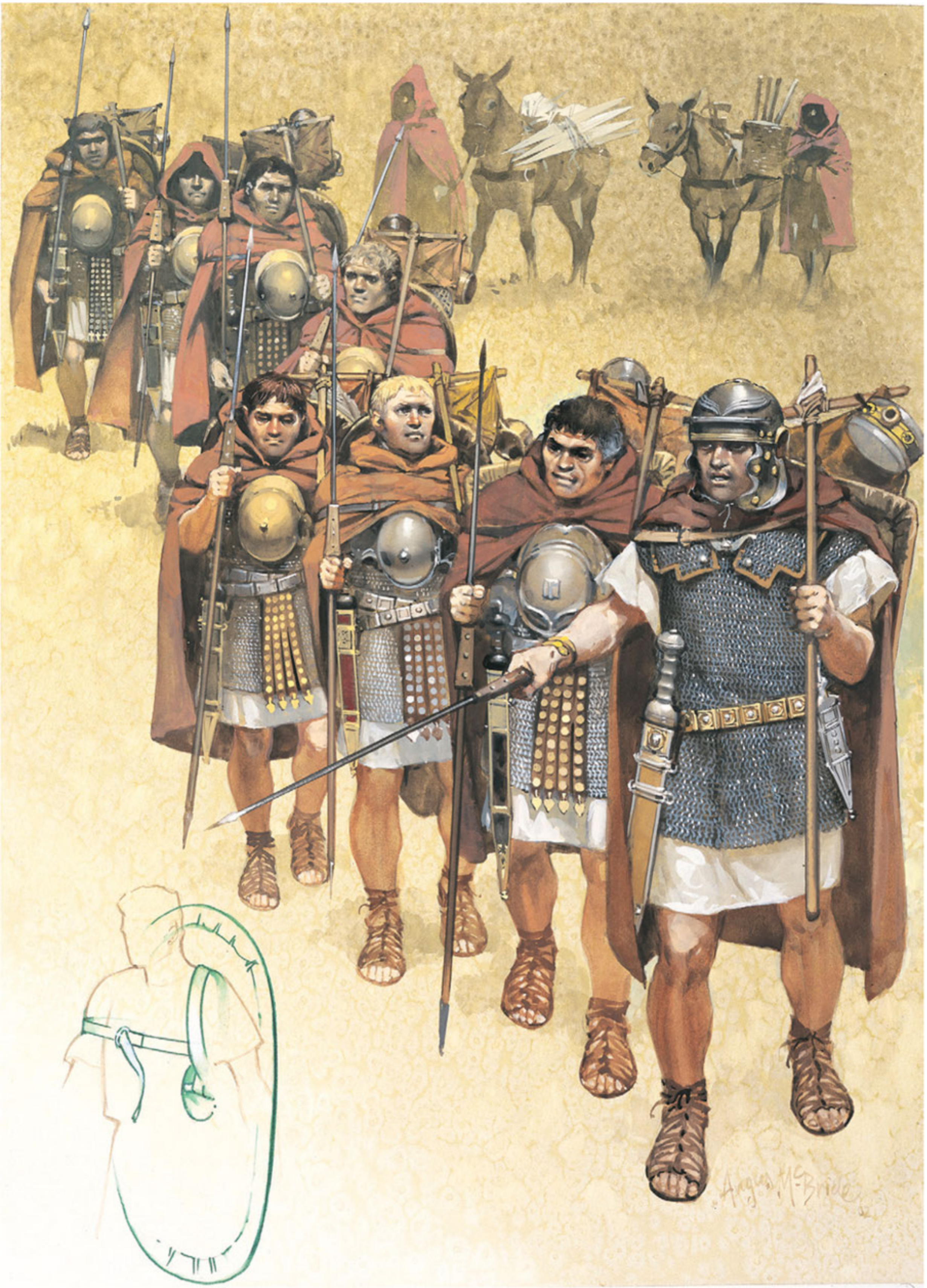
Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 373: The Sarmatians 600 BC–AD 450, by R Brzezinski and M Mielczarek.

The soldier-emperor Trajan led two hard campaigns (AD 101–102, and 104–106) against the Dacians in what is roughly modern Rumania. During this war the legions also came up against Sarmatian heavy cavalry. These allies of the Dacians were from the Roxolani branch of the Sarmatian peoples, who had wandered from east of the Don river to inhabit the steppes north of the Black Sea, like the Scythians before them.

In the AD 60s and 80s they had raided into Rome's eastern provinces, where their heavy armoured cavalry inflicted at least one major defeat on Rome's essentially infantry army. Their scale armour and spangenhelm (frame-and-segment) helmets, and their weapons and tactics, may be reconstructed from carvings on Trajan's Column, Pontic wall-paintings, archaeology and Roman descriptions. They carried either a very long lance, wielded two-handed, or a powerful composite bow, and a short sword with a ring-shaped pommel worn strapped to the right thigh under the flap of the armour. Their horses, too, were sometimes protected by scale-armour 'barding'. During the reigns of later emperors, defeated Sarmatians were taken into Roman service and settled inside the empire – mostly in Hungary, but also some in Britain.

ROMAN IMPERIAL LEGIONARIES

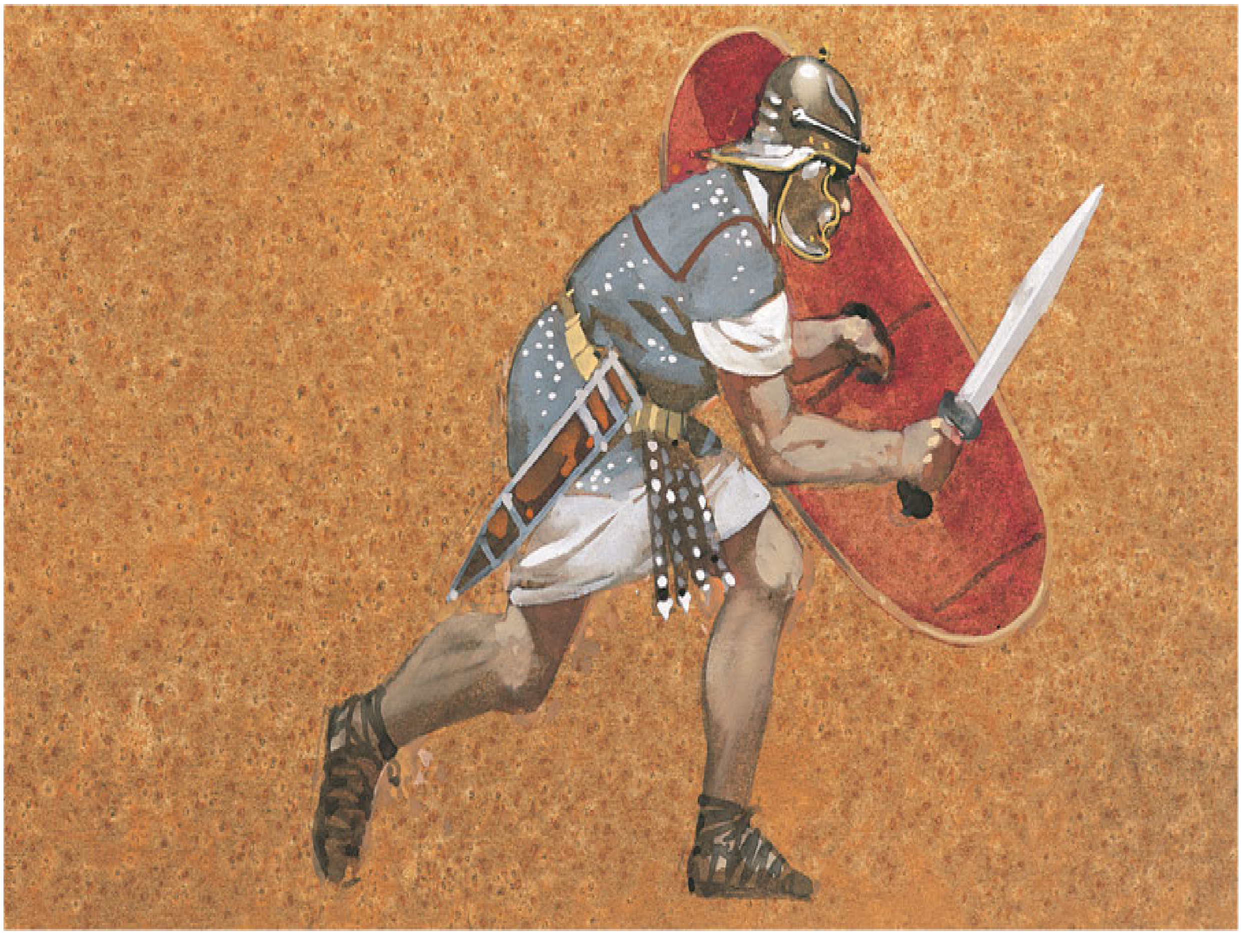
EARLY 1ST CENTURY AD


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from WAR 71: Roman Legionary 58 BC–AD 69, by Ross Cowan.

In 27 BC the civil wars that had plagued Rome for generations ended in the final victory of Octavius Caesar, who installed himself as the Emperor Augustus. The forces previously raised by consuls for particular campaigns now gave way to a professional army, well trained and highly disciplined. Citizen volunteers served in the 5,500-man legions stationed in the empire’s subject provinces, backed by a similar number of non-citizen ‘auxiliaries’ in separate battalion-size cohorts spread along the frontiers. All had settled career structures and pay scales; armour and weapons produced to common specifications; and – if they survived for 25 years – retirement benefits, including land grants for legionaries and Roman citizenship for auxiliaries. These were no longer warriors or militiamen, but Europe’s first ‘soldiers’ in the modern sense.

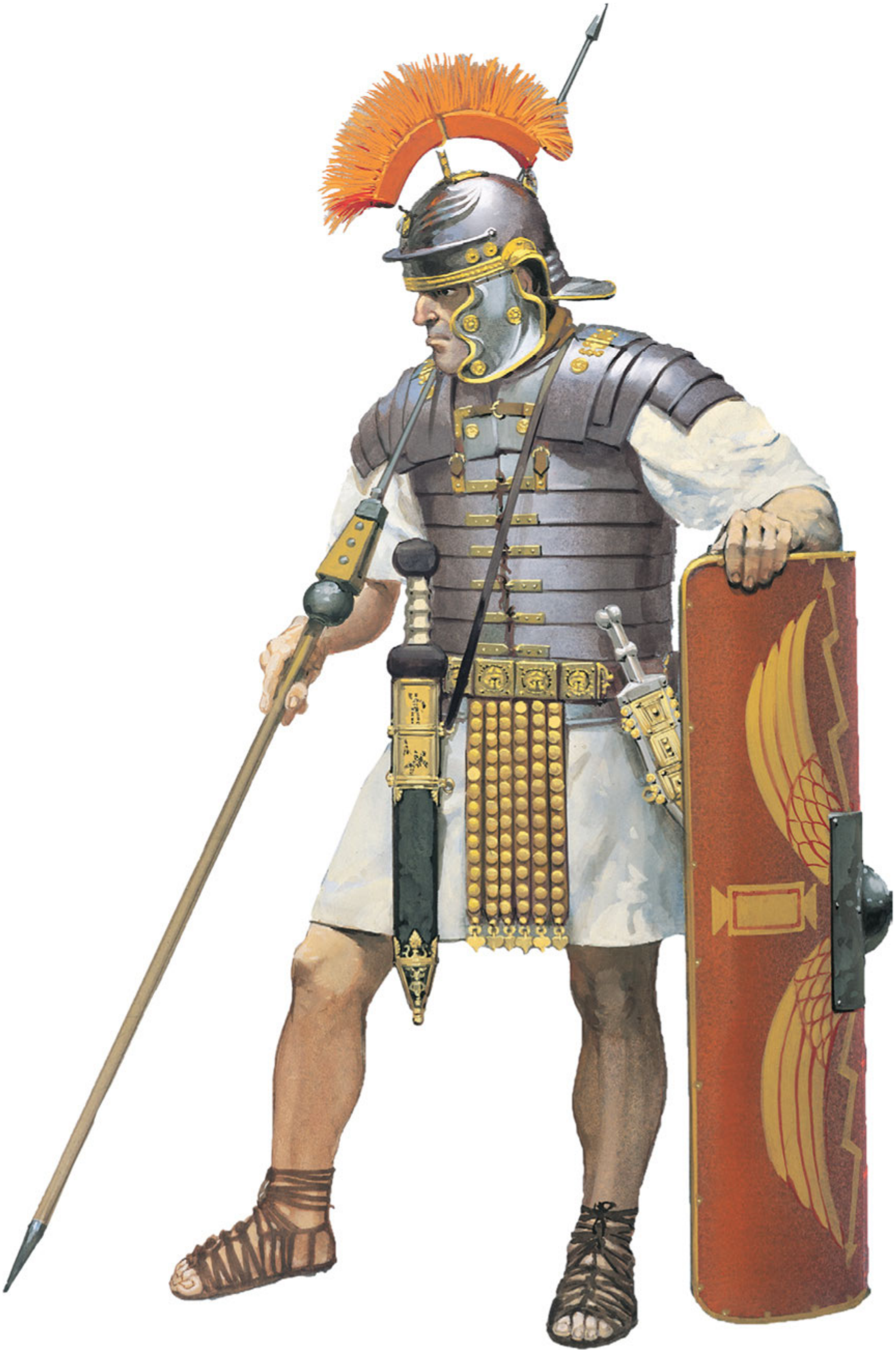
Under their hooded cloaks these legionaries still wear ringmail corselets, and iron or bronze helmets developed from a Gallic model. Each has a javelin, a large shield slung on his back, and a sword and dagger on military belts from which studded straps hang to protect the groin. Even their camping gear, carried hanging from shoulder-poles, is of standard designs, like the squad tents and the double-ended stakes for the camp parapet that are carried by the unit’s mules.



Augustan legionary in a crouch stance, attacking with the stabbing-sword (gladius).

ROMAN LEGIONARY

LATE 1ST CENTURY AD



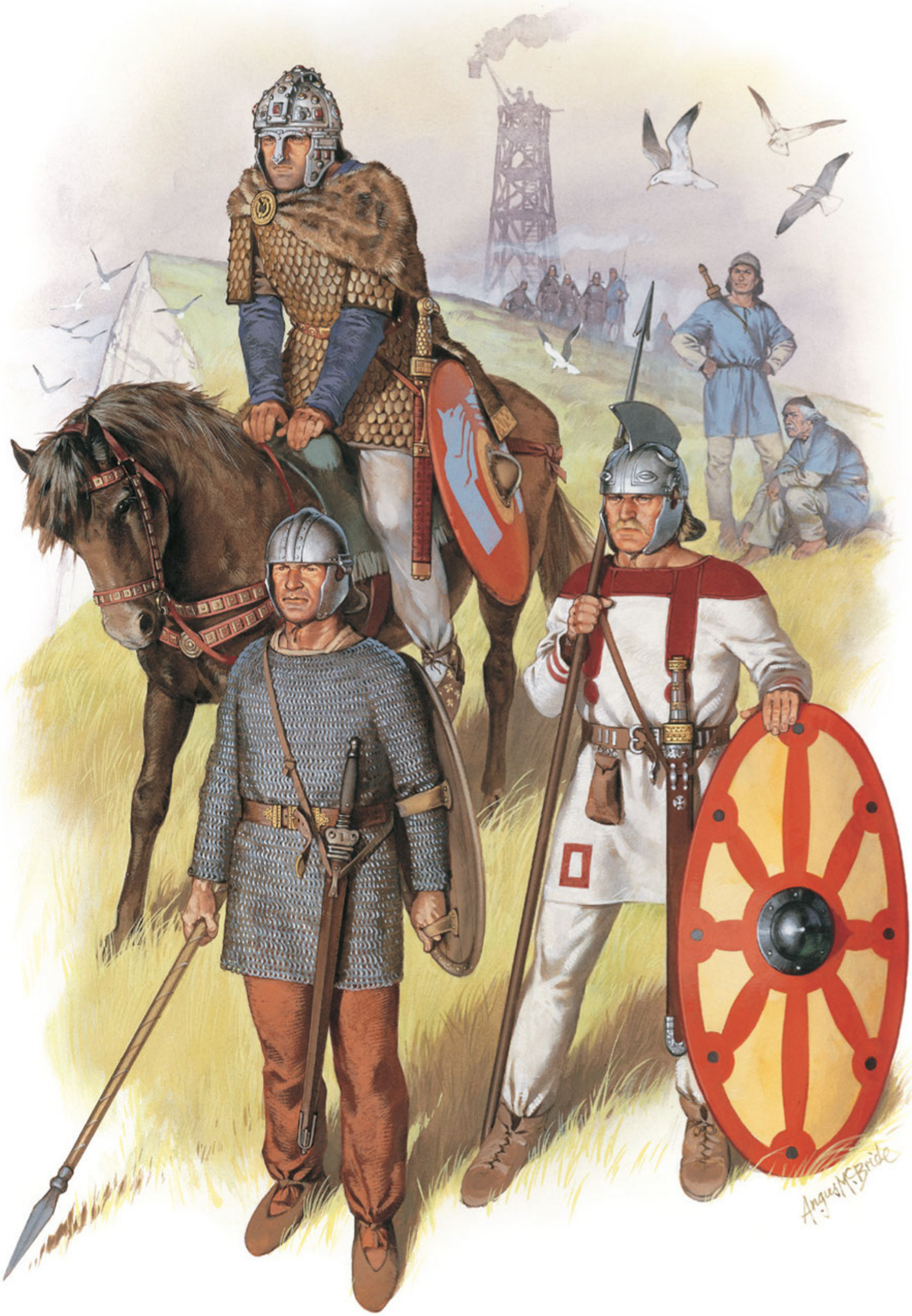
Artwork by Angus McBride, from WAR 71: Roman Legionary 58 BC–AD 69, by Ross Cowan.

The most famous of all Roman armours, treated as 'generic' by film-makers, was this segmented, hooped iron cuirass – the lorica segmentata. Shown on Trajan's Column at the turn of the 1st/2nd centuries AD, it is now known from sculptural and archaeological evidence (particularly finds of its characteristic bronze hinge and hook fittings) to have been worn in various forms by at least some legionaries from the early 1st century AD until the mid 3rd century AD, and all over the empire.

The helmet, originally of Gallic origin, is handsomely trimmed with bronze, and here fitted with a horsehair crest for a formal parade. The semi-cylindrical scutum shield, of plywood faced with felt and leather, is painted with a blazon associated (from tombstones) with Legio II Augusta, long based in Britain. Soldiers seem to have displayed their personal wealth by buying decorated versions of such items as scabbards, like that of this splendid 'Pompeii'-type gladius sword. The pilum (javelin) came in both light and heavy models; this is the latter, with a ball-shaped lead weight on the shaft. Many examples of military sandals have been found, with hobnailed soles. The assumption that military tunics were always red has now been discounted, and for parades bleached white wool is thought more likely.

ROMAN TROOPS IN BRITAIN

4TH–5TH CENTURIES AD


Angus McBride

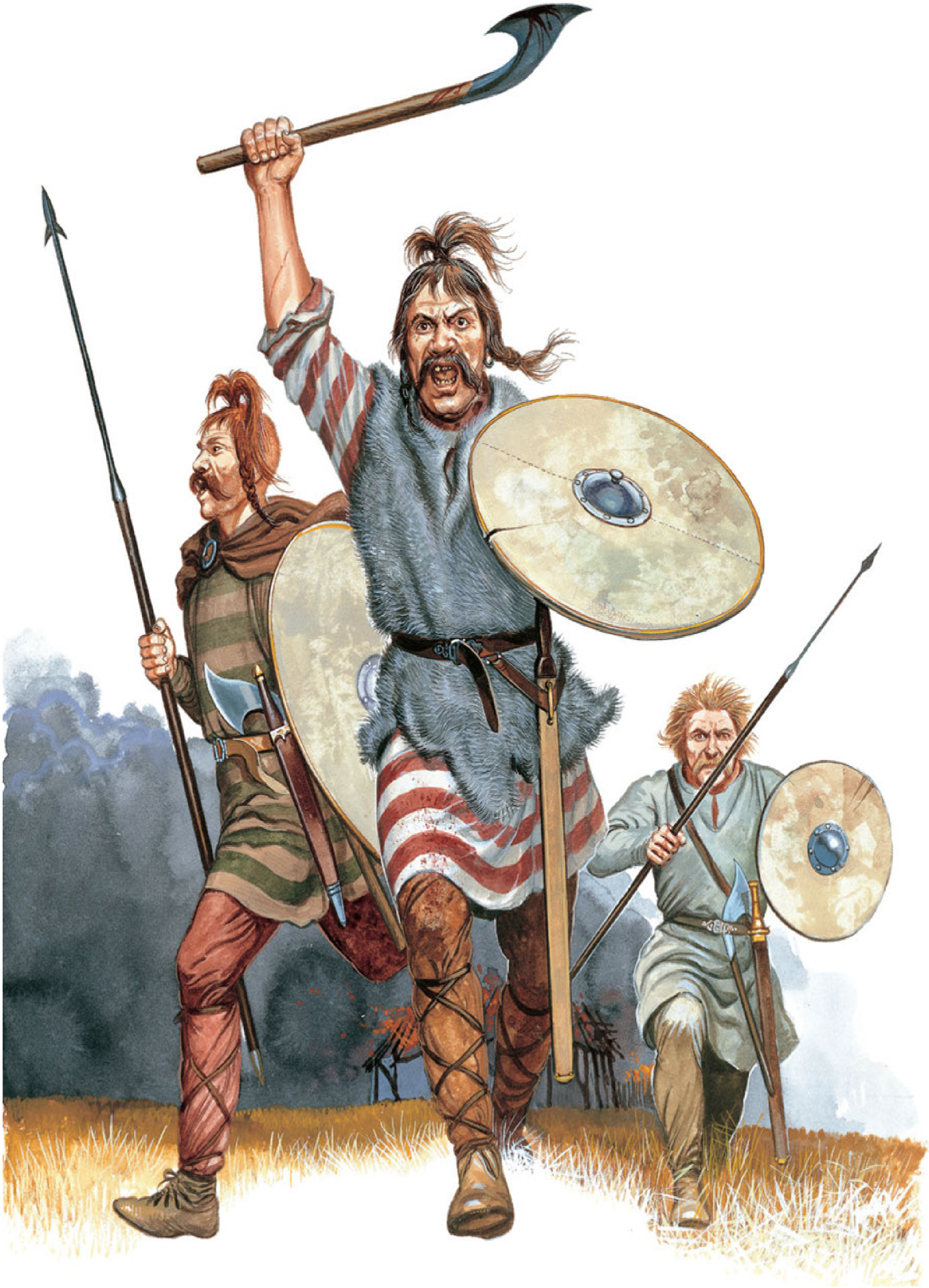
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 154: Arthur and the Anglo-Saxon Wars, by David Nicolle.

By about 400 AD the appearance of Roman soldiers had changed out of all recognition. This was due to the influence of the foreigners increasing enlisted by the late emperors; Germanic styles became popular, as did Asiatic fashions picked up during campaigns and garrison postings in the Eastern empire.

Long-sleeved Germanic tunics and long trousers had been widely adopted during the 3rd century, when ringmail also returned as the almost universal body armour, and swords became longer. Helmets later became much simpler, cheaply mass-produced in two-piece ‘ridge’ style. The infantry junior officer’s helmet (right foreground) has a sheet-metal crest, but that of the mounted cavalry officer is silver-plated, and lavishly decorated with semi-precious stones – presumably, a ‘parade’ piece. The cavalry officer wears bronze scale armour of Asiatic (perhaps Sarmatian?) style, and the infantry officer displays typical late-Empire woven decorations on his tunic. A 5th-century document, the Notitia Dignitatum, identifies the shield blazons of units in various provinces; the junior officer’s red ‘wheel’ is associated with a 1,000-man ‘legion’ then called the Secunda Britannica – perhaps a final descendant of the old Legio II Augusta?

FRANKISH WARRIORS

5TH CENTURY AD



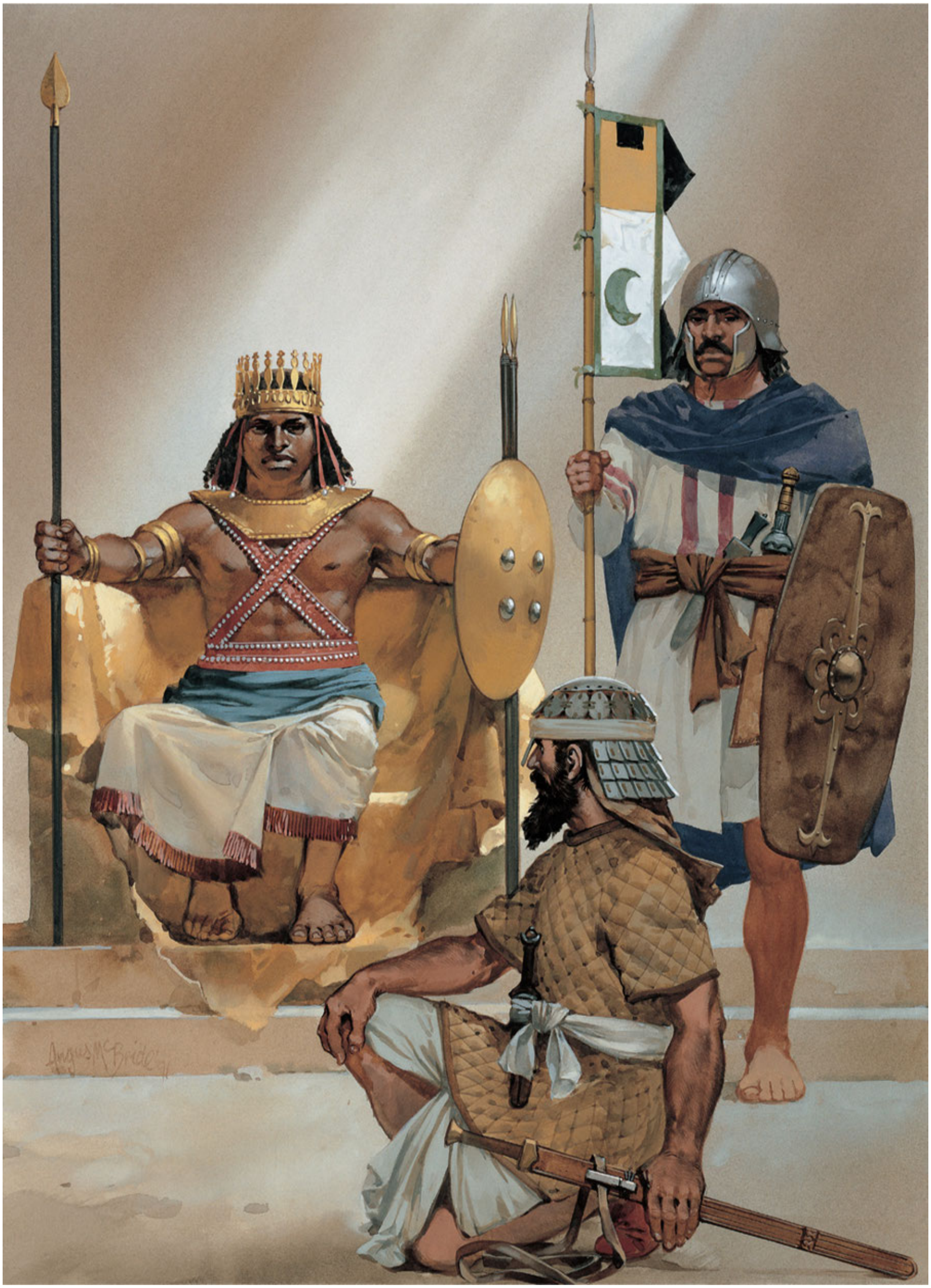
Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 129: Rome's Enemies (1), by Peter Wilcox.

During the 4th century Rome's weakness in manpower, and migratory pressures from the east, led to the settlement of many Germanic communities inside the empire, and some immigrants rose to high rank in the Roman army. But the pressure from the east constantly increased, and in the first decade of the 5th century huge confederations of Germanic tribes – the strongest being Franks from north of the river Main, the Alemanni, Vandals, and Goths – finally burst across the Rhine and overran the Western Empire forever. The field units in Britain were pulled out in AD 407, and Rome itself was sacked in 410.

Sources for reconstructing the appearance of these migratory peoples are few and thin, but some do exist. Top-knot hairstyles, shaved at the back but with side-plaits, are thought to have been characteristic. Sidonious Apollinaris, a 5th-century Gallo-Roman, wrote that the Franks wore tunics brightly dyed and striped. The weapons illustrated are all from recovered examples of the period, of which several have richly gilded fittings. Types particularly associated with the Franks are the angon javelin (left), with a long iron shank recalling the old Roman pilum; and the francisca throwing-axe (centre), with a shallow, forward-swept head.

ARABIAN AND ETHIOPIAN WARRIORS

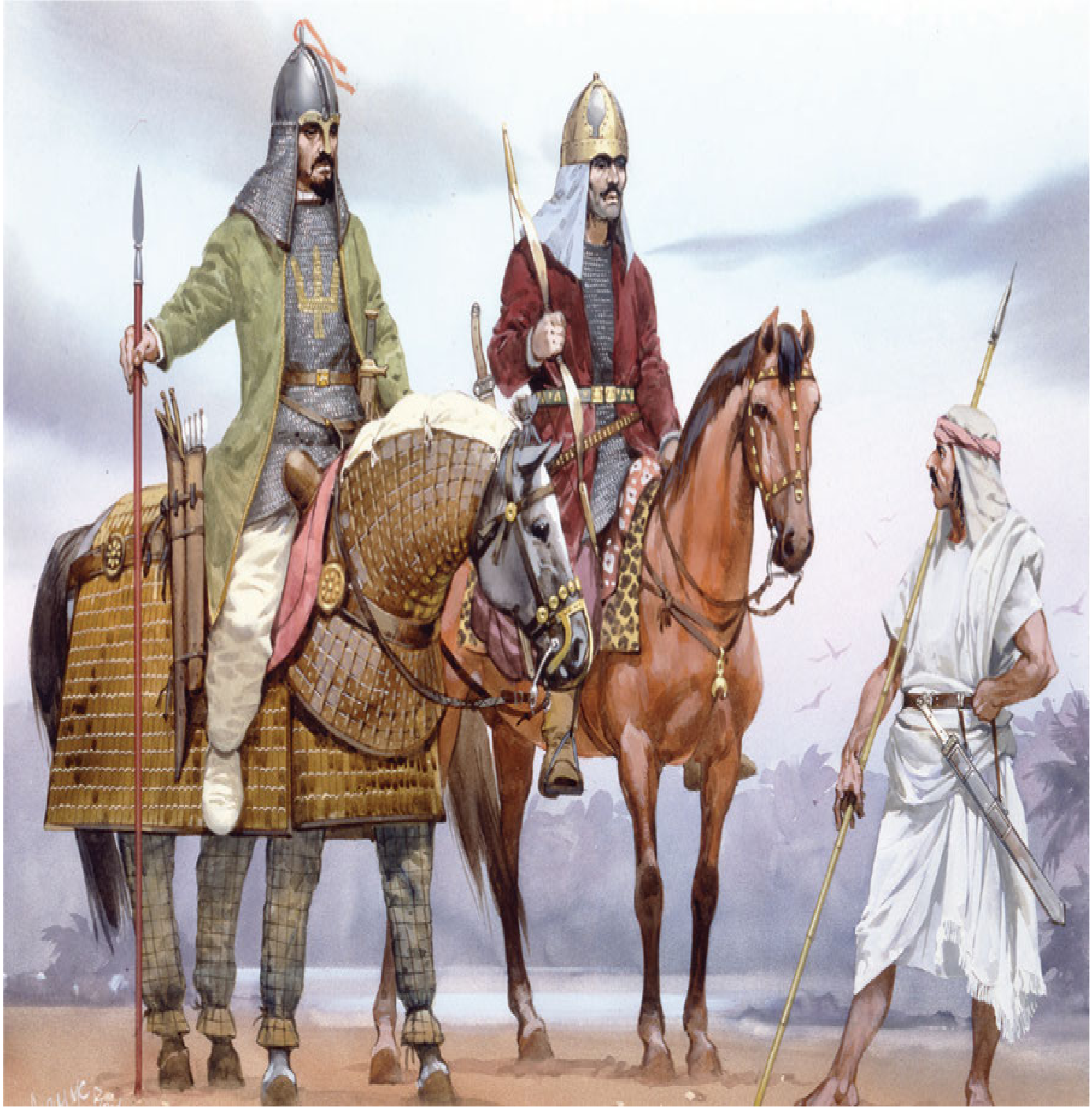
4TH–6TH CENTURIES AD


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 243: Rome's Enemies (5), by David Nicolle.

In the Ancient and Medieval worlds there was no such thing as a rigidly 'national' style of costume and armour. There were local customs and norms of materials and manufacture, certainly; but frontiers were fluid, and fashions followed trade. This was especially true of the Middle East, which was the hub of land and sea trading networks that directly or indirectly connected the whole known world.

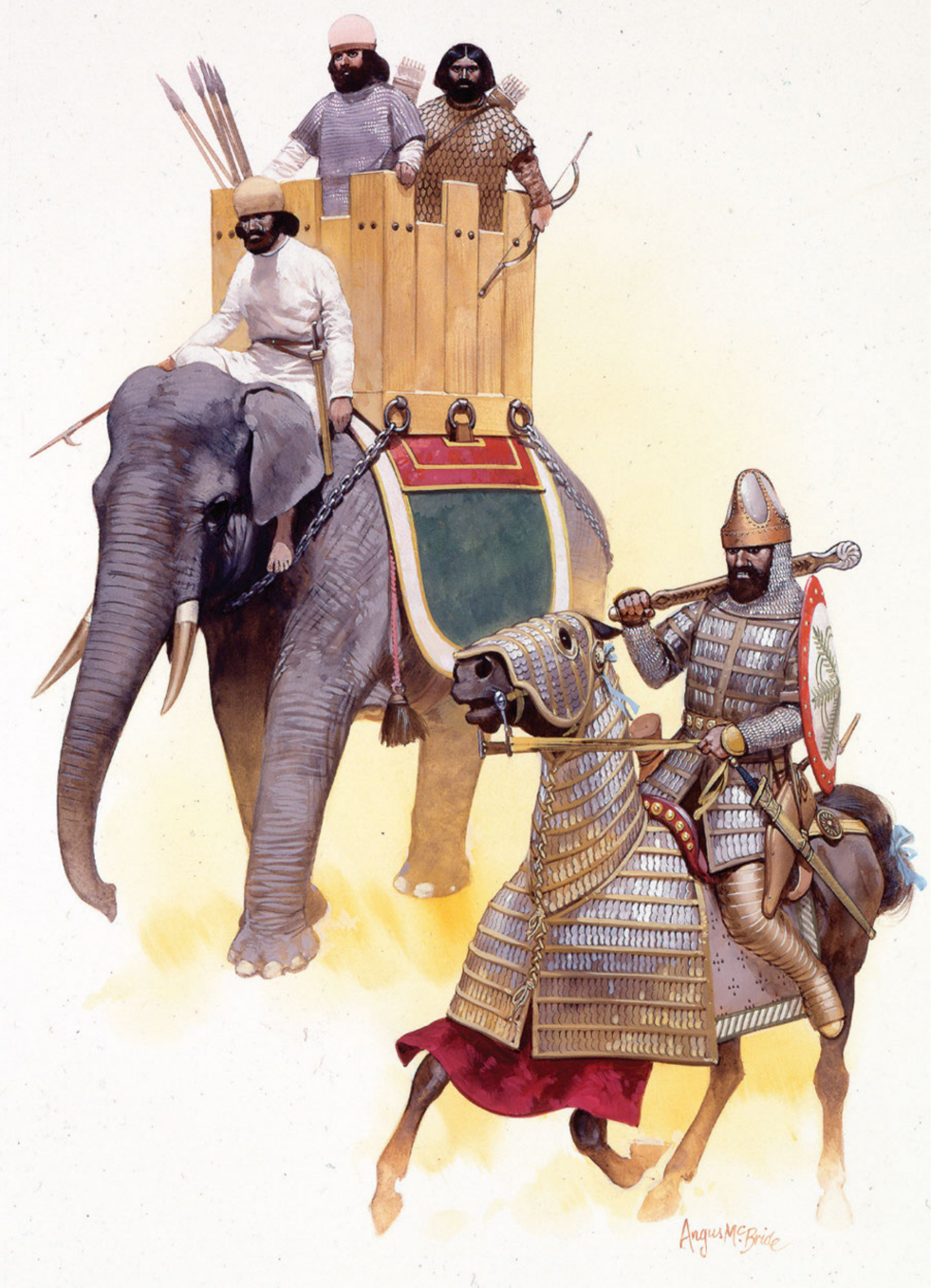
The Roman empire's desert frontiers, and those of its Eastern successor ruled from Byzantium, remained mostly quiet. Unlike the formidable Iranians to the east, the southern peoples posed no real threat beyond ambushing trade caravans, and troops could not follow when they dispersed into the wilderness. In this example of the widely mixed sources of weapons and armour found in the Middle East, an enthroned Ethiopian governor presides in the Yemen, southern Arabia. His Yemeni guard (holding a banner from the Hadramawt) has a local bronze-pommelled shortsword, but his helmet is of an early Byzantine type, and his tunic and shield also show Roman influences. The kneeling soldier is a marine from Oman, where his long Sassanian sword was found; his helmet made from iron scales, and his quilted jerkin, betray seagoing contacts with northern India.



Arab-Iranian warriors, 3rd–6th centuries AD.

SASSANIAN HEAVY CAVALRYMAN AND WAR ELEPHANT

6TH CENTURY AD


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 175: Rome's Enemies (3), by Peter Wilcox.

Throughout Rome's history her most dangerous near-neighbour was a vast and shifting Iranian empire to the east of Roman Syria. It stretched from Armenia and the Caspian down to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, and from Iraq far eastwards into the Central Asian steppes. More than one Roman army was wiped out, and the Emperor Valerian was killed (AD 260), while campaigning on this frontier. The original Parthian rulers were overthrown early in the 3rd century by the Sassanian Persians, who continued to threaten the Roman and later Byzantine empires into the 7th century.

Surrounded by light horse-archers, the core strength of the Iranians was their aristocratic heavy cavalry, called by the Romans clibanarii. Completely protected – including their big horses – by lamellar, mail and plate armour, they carried long lances but also bows, and close-combat weapons included heavy iron-shod maces. The Sassanians also certainly used war-elephants, imported (with their drivers) from India; these were placed in the rear of the battle-array, carrying mercenary archers. As in other ancient armies (e.g. that of Carthage), the difficulty of controlling them may have made the elephants' value more psychological than military.

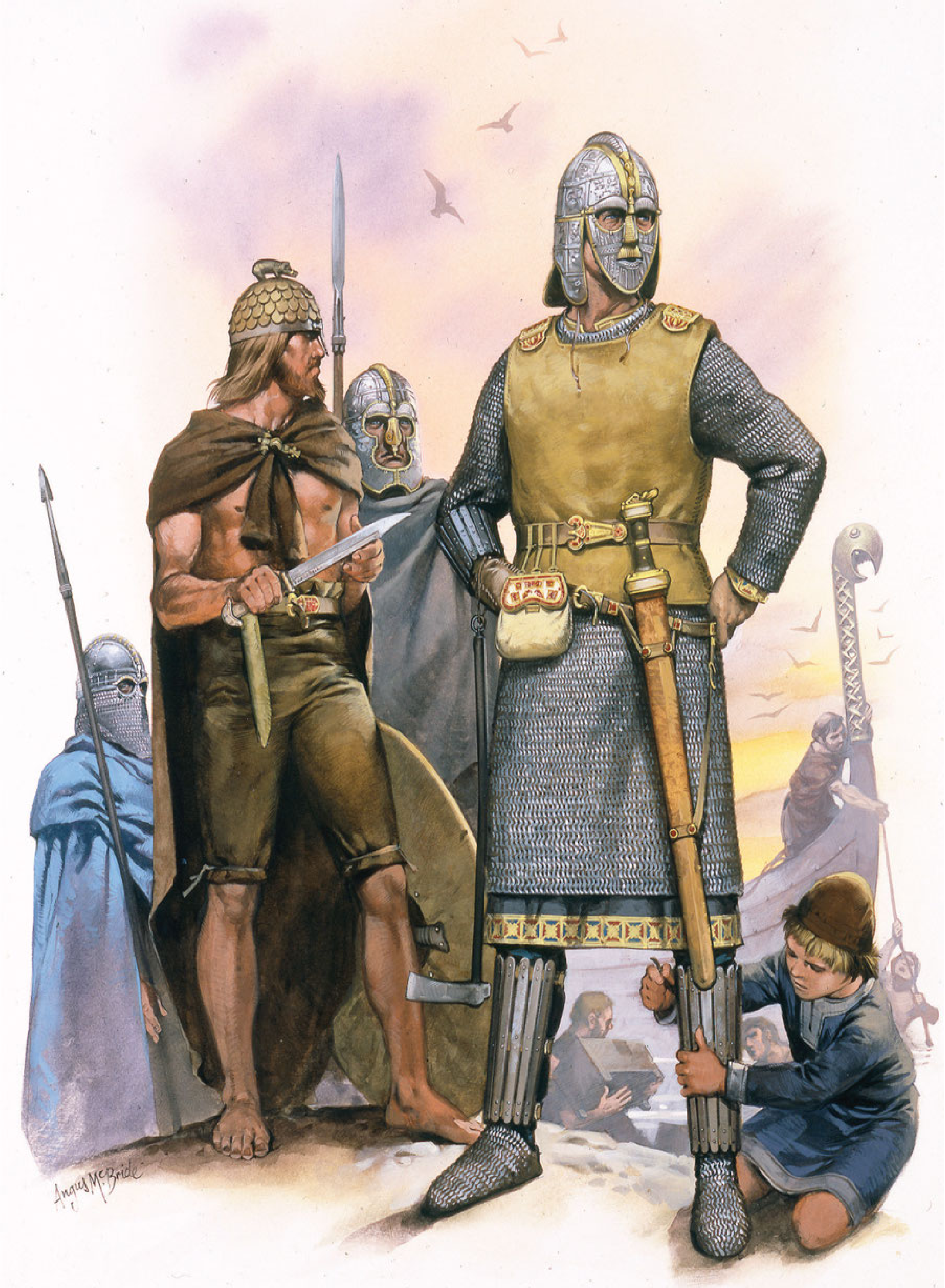
THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

AD 600–1500

Artwork by Giuseppe Rava, from MAA 459: The Varangian Guard 988–1453, by Raffaele D’Amato (top); and by Angus McBride, from MAA 259: The Mamluks 1250–1517, by David Nicolle (bottom).

SAXON INVADERS IN BRITAIN

7TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

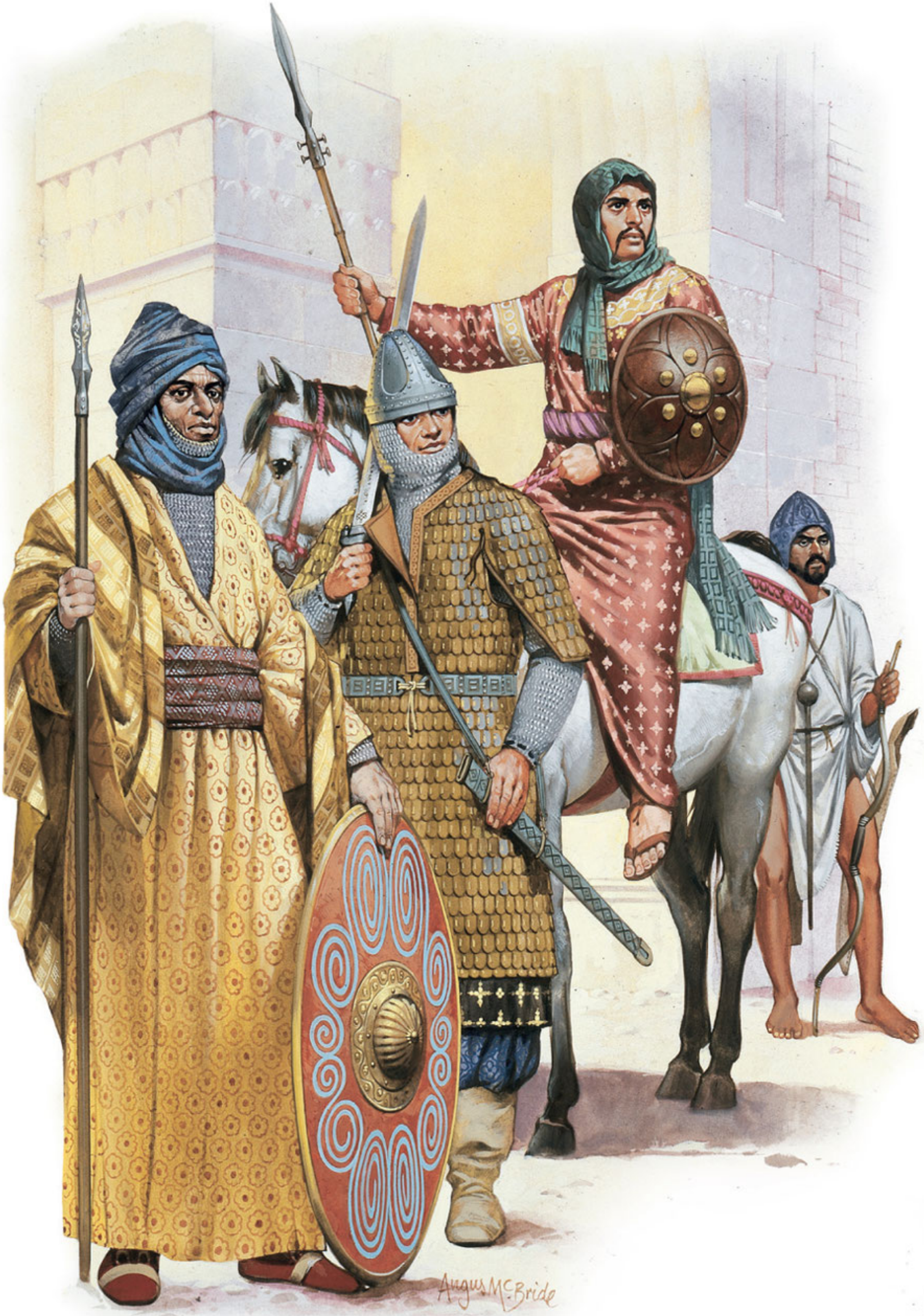
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 154: Arthur and the Anglo-Saxon Wars, by David Nicolle.

Long before the 5th-century departure of the Roman field army, raids from across the North Sea had threatened Britain, prompting the building of forts and naval bases up the east coast – the 'Saxon Shore'. Over the following centuries the Romano-Celts were steadily pushed into the west of Britain by successive waves of Angles, Saxons and Jutes, who came first as raiders and mercenaries, and then as settlers. These newcomers expanded from the east and south coasts until, by about 660, only Strathclyde, Cumbria, Wales and the south-western peninsula remained 'British', as opposed to 'English'.

Evidence from these 'Dark Ages' is fragmentary, but magnificent. The main figure here, including his sword and gold and jewelled belt fittings, is based on the 7th-century Sutton Hoo ship-burial of an East Anglian king. His helmet recalls both late Roman cavalry types and 6th-century finds from graves near Vendel in Sweden, but his narrow-headed battleaxe and 'splint' limb armour reflect Asian styles – thus confirming widespread trade contacts even after the fall of Rome. The helmets of the two cloaked spearmen (background) are also Vendel types. The Mercian warrior (centre) has a simpler helmet made of horn plates in an iron framework, surmounted by a boar crest, as found at Benty Grange in the Midlands.

WARRIORS OF THE UMAYYAD CALIPHATE

8TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

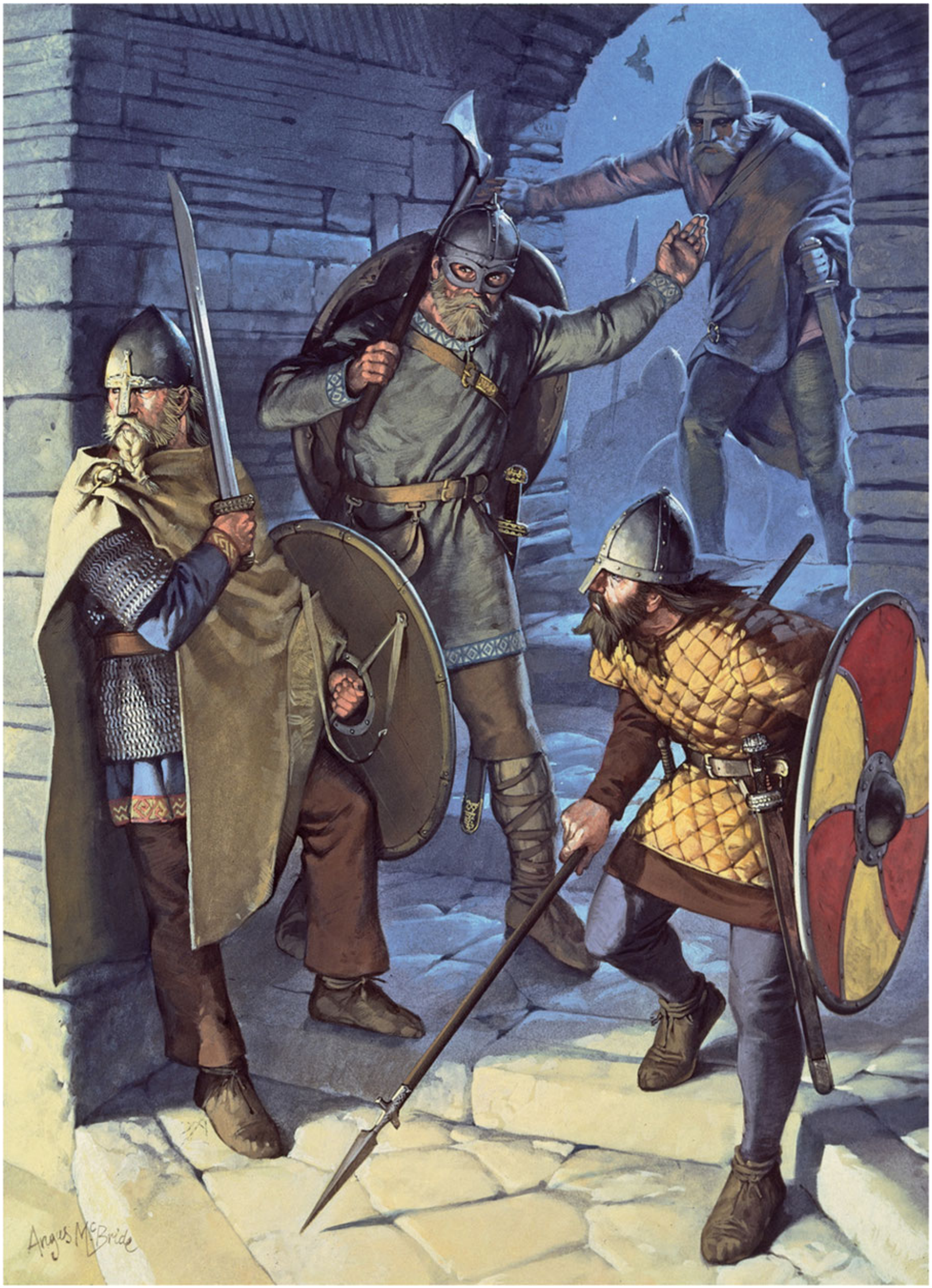
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 125: The Armies of Islam 7th–11th Centuries, by David Nicolle.

The original dynastic state established during the first, vigorous expansion of Islam from its Arabian heartland was the Umayyad caliphate (661–750), centred on Damascus. By the mid 8th century Muslim armies had overrun the whole Middle East, Iran, much of Central Asia and northern India, and in the West they had swept through North Africa to conquer Spain and penetrate France. At first having few horses, they travelled mostly by camel as ‘mounted infantry’, who dismounted to fight on foot. However, the Arab armies absorbed influences – and soon, recruits – from all the newly conquered regions; these reconstructions are based on frescoes, statuettes, carvings and coin designs.

The left-hand spearman is an elite guardsman, wearing a pointed helmet and a ringmail corselet beneath his turban and robe, and equipped to fight in a close formation of infantry. His more heavily armoured comrade, with an Iranian helmet and long scale body-armour, is one of the single-combat champions who preceded some Islamic armies into battle. The aristocratic Bedouin light cavalryman does not yet have stirrups, and is equipped only for skirmishing. The same is true of the archer, though he has a cloth-covered metal helmet, and carries a heavy mace as well as his powerful composite bow.

VIKING RAIDERS

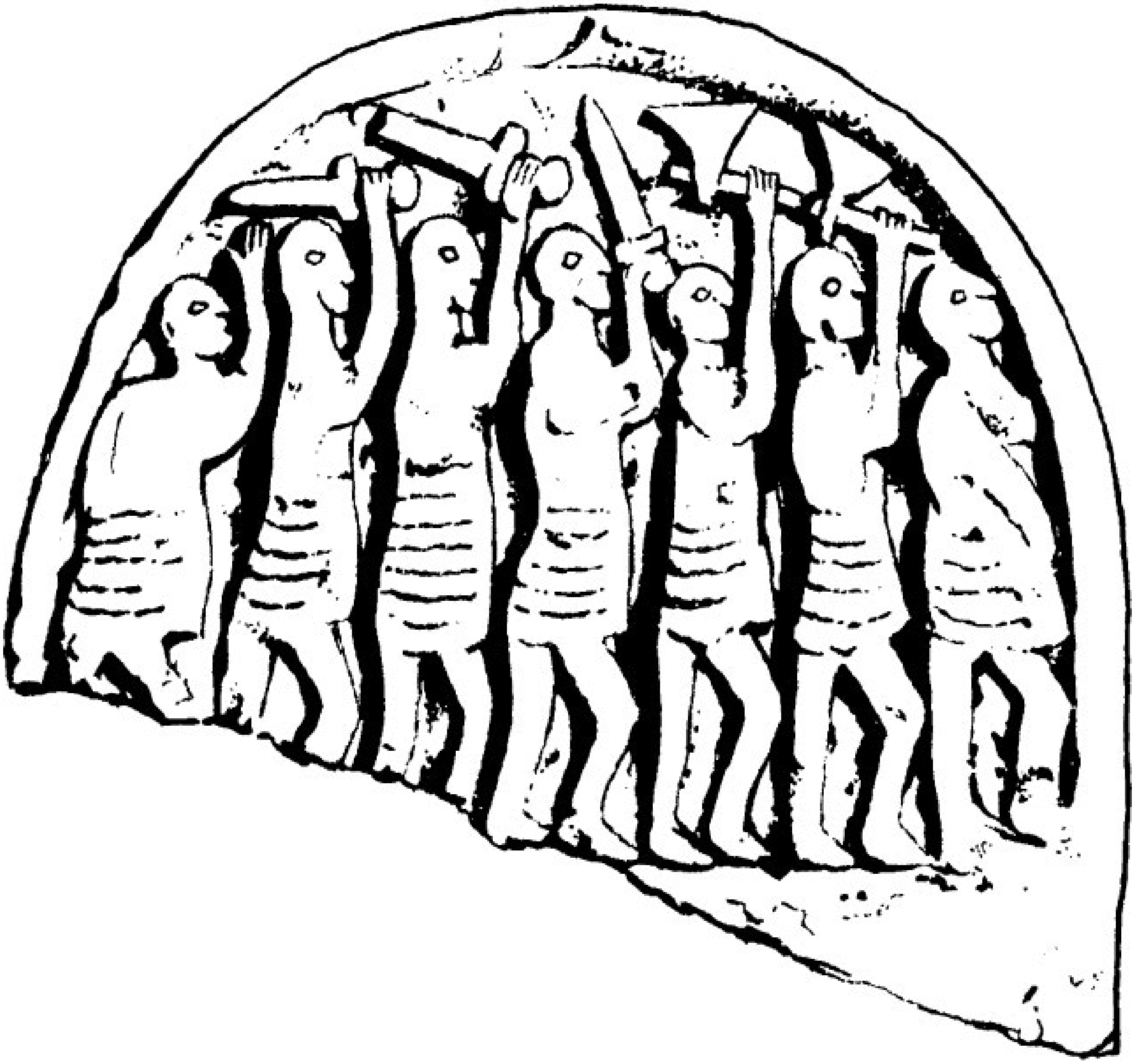
9TH/10TH CENTURIES


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from ELI 3: The Vikings, by Ian Heath.

In 793 the first shocking raid on Britain by ‘Vikings’ from Scandinavia wiped out the northern island monastery of Lindisfarne, and for the next 250 years these superb navigators and fearsome warriors would plague the British Isles and mainland Europe. They quickly progressed from coastal raids to rowing their longships far up rivers to attack cities, and from overwintering in stockaded camps to bringing their families across to settle and farm, eventually occupying large regions of England, Ireland and France under their own kings.

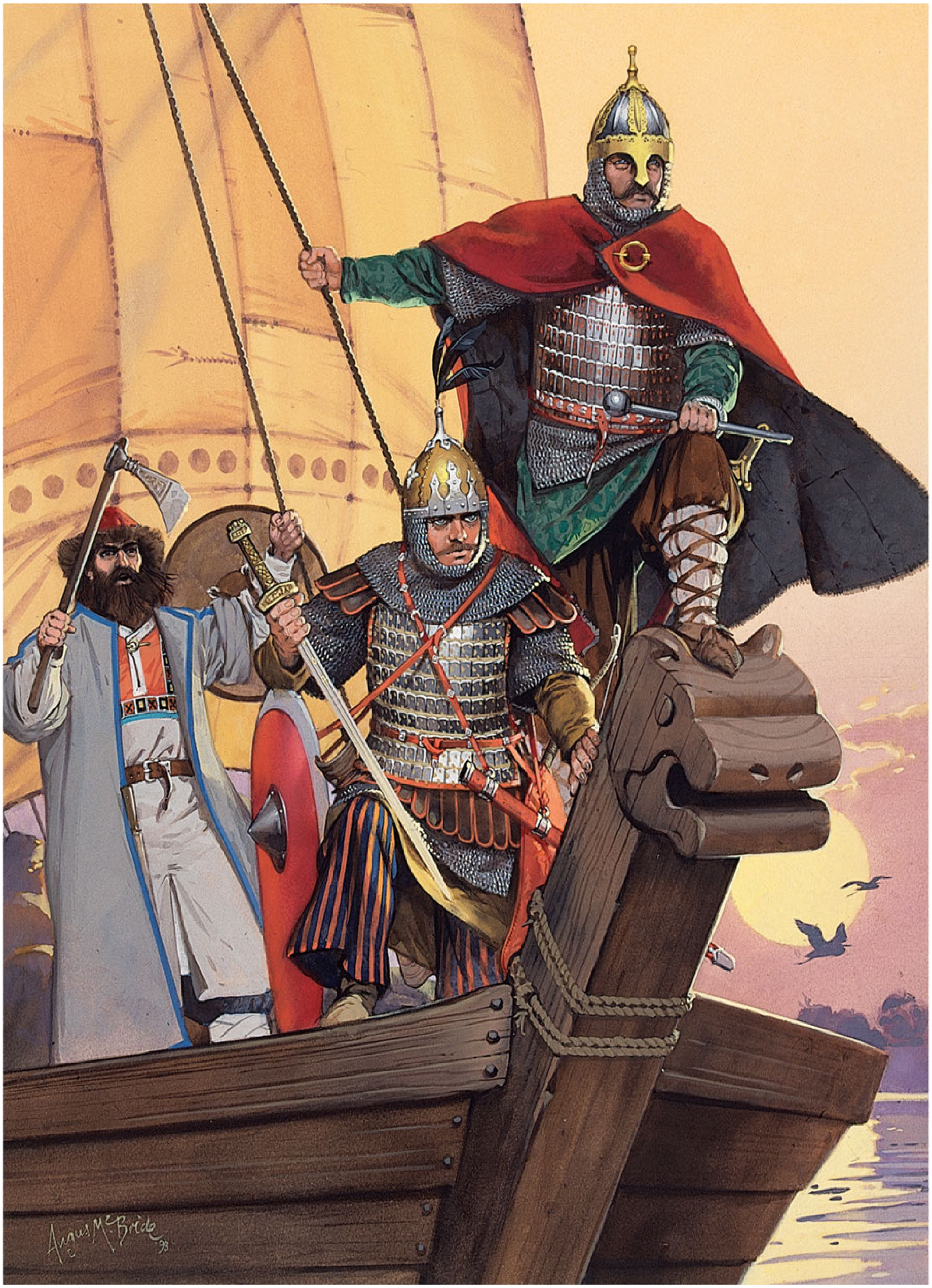
The Norsemen wore woollen tunics (sometimes decorated with braid edging), long trousers, and brooched cloaks. Their war gear was usually limited to a simple helmet of one-piece or frame-and-segment construction, often with a nasal bar or ‘goggles’ guarding the face, and a round wooden shield with an iron boss. Some carvings suggest quilted cloth armour (right). Only the wealthiest (left) could afford a ringmail corselet or brynja; this took about 22lbs of iron laboriously drawn out into wire, then forged into perhaps 25,000 interlinked and riveted rings. Even a fine sword could cost as much as a farmstead, so most warriors carried a simple spear and/or an axe – the latter as much a tool as a weapon, though fitted to a longer helve for combat.



Vikings, from a tomb at Lindisfarne monastery, by Ian Heath.

KIEVAN WARRIORS, RUSSIA

10TH/11TH CENTURIES


Angus McBride
93

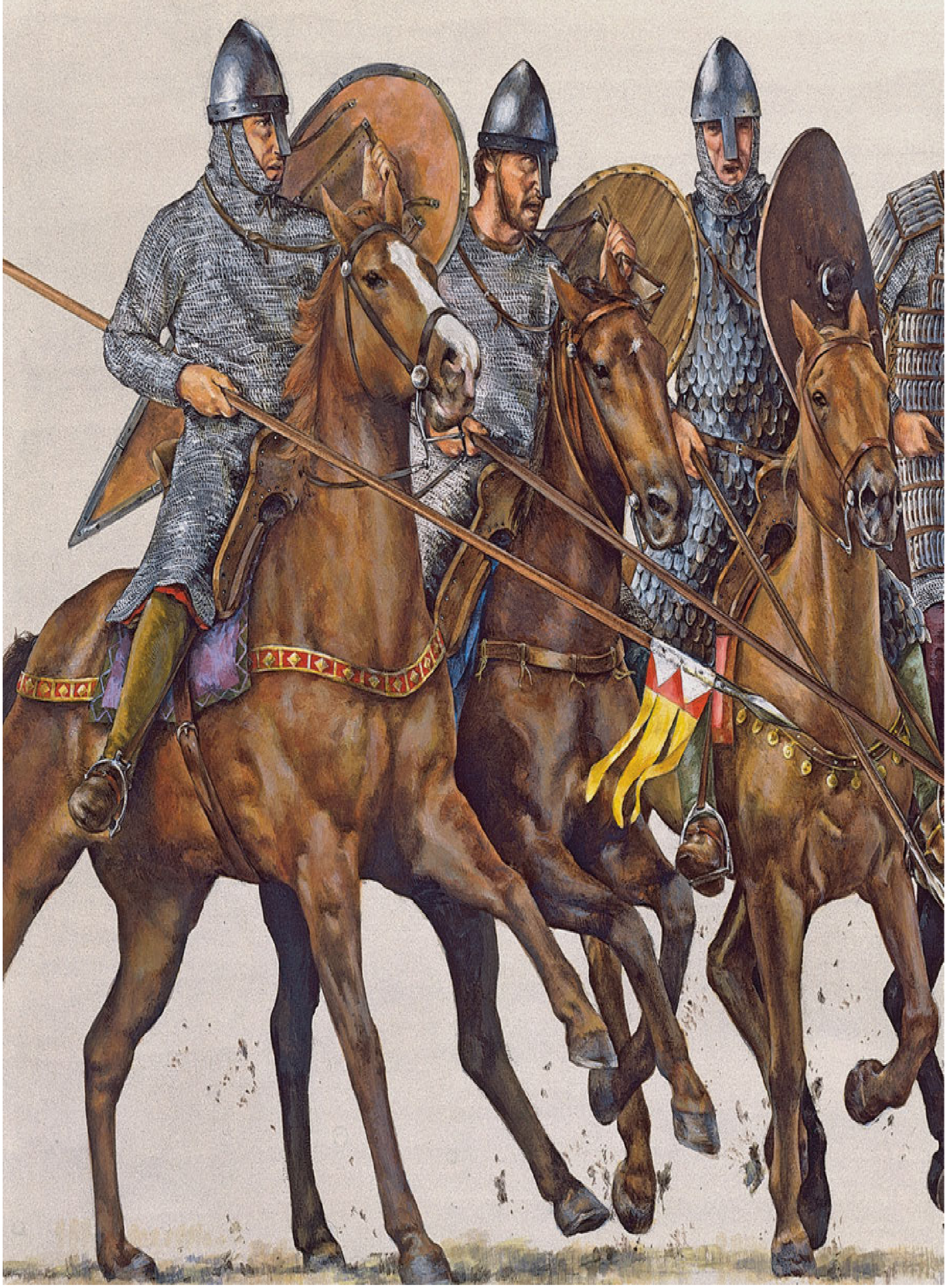
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 333: Armies of Medieval Russia 750–1250, by David Nicolle.

Russia takes its name from the ‘Rus’ – the Vikings whose trading voyages from the Baltic coast up the great rivers carried them deep into Ukraine and beyond. By the late 10th century these settlers dominated local Slav populations from trading centres such as the city of Kiev. Their mastery of the rivers that were the only practical routes through the vast forests and swamps made them the rulers of a region half the size of Europe; they adopted Orthodox Christianity, but this did not lessen their ferocity. Enriched by trading that connected Scandinavia in the north with the Black Sea and Byzantium to the south, their princes pursued campaigns against local settled and nomadic peoples, and even against the Byzantines.

Inevitably, their war gear came to reflect local as well as Scandinavian styles. These two elite warriors – a nobleman (right), and a soldier of his elite druzhina household troops – display items from the culture of the steppe horsemen: decorated iron and bronze ‘spired’ helmets, iron scale armour worn in conjunction with ringmail, and archery equipment slung from the belt. The baggy Slavic trousers, requiring much cloth, were a sign of wealth. The local town militiaman (left) is identified as a prosperous merchant by his fine silver-inlaid axe.

NORMAN KNIGHTS

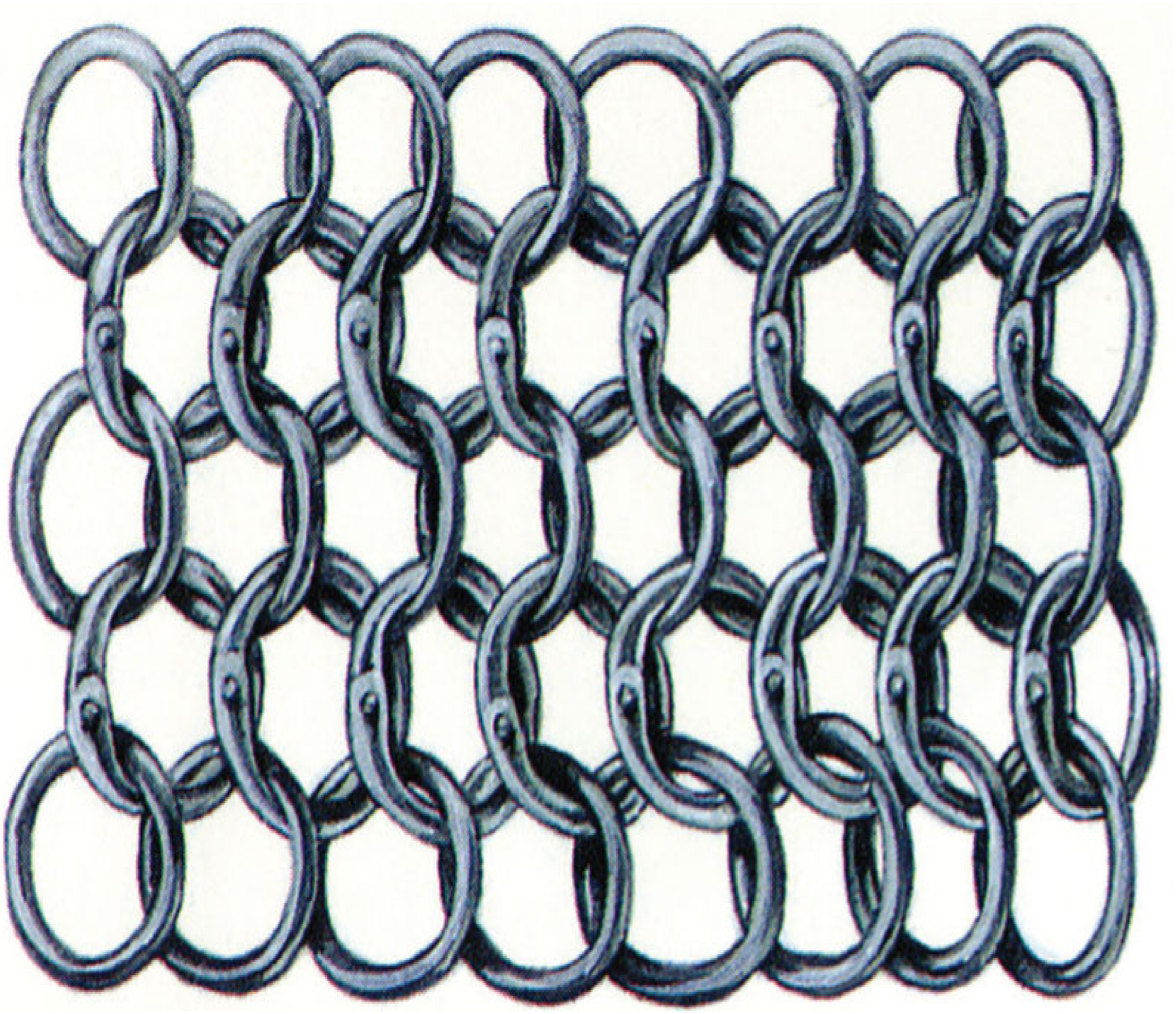
11TH CENTURY



Artwork by Christa Hook, from WAR 1: Norman Knight AD 950–1204, by Christopher Gravett.

Since the fall of the Western Roman Empire, European armies had been essentially footsoldiers. The adoption of horseback fighting, by the descendants of Vikings who settled in Normandy, would revolutionize European warfare. The cost of mounting and armouring men for massed shock charges was immense, but the Normans' 'feudal system' made it possible. All lands belonged to the ruler: in return for oaths of loyalty and military service, he granted a pyramid of noblemen and knights (his vassals) territories (fiefs), and virtual ownership of the peasant serfs who worked them. These lands produced the income to buy the armour and horses that the vassals would need when the ruler summoned them to war, and allowed them the leisure to train for it.

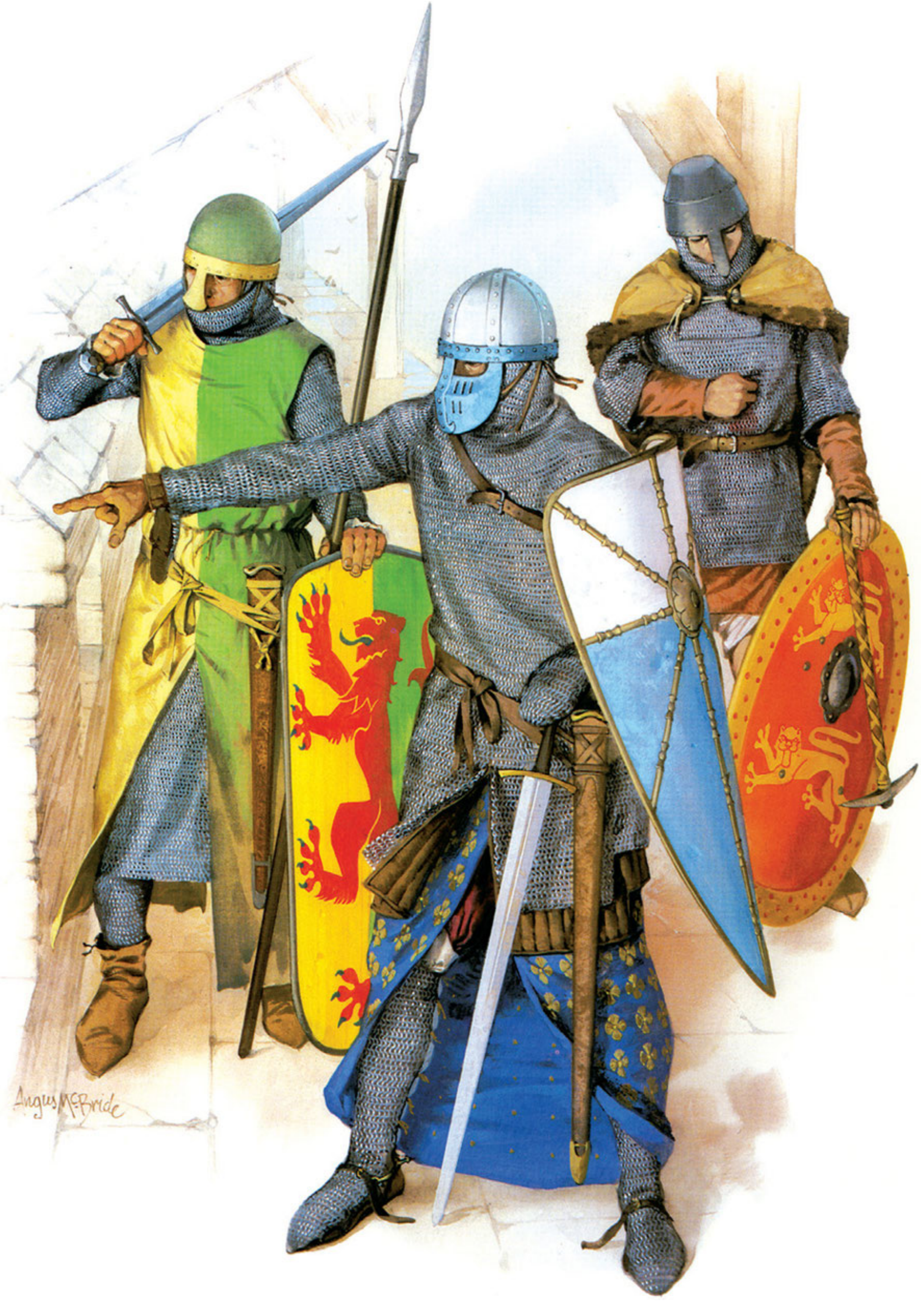
The Norman 'knight' fought in a close-packed conroi squadron, held steady on his horse by a high wooden saddle and stirrups. His weapons were a long lance held 'couched' under the right arm, and a long broadsword for close combat. He was protected by a big kite-shaped shield; an iron helmet with a frontal nasal bar; and a long ringmail coat or hauberk with an integral coif hood, worn over a padded coat and cap. Normans fighting in the Mediterranean region also wore Eastern-style scale and lamellar armours (right).



Detail of ringmail worn by the Norman knight.

DEFENDERS OF NORMANDY

LATE 12TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

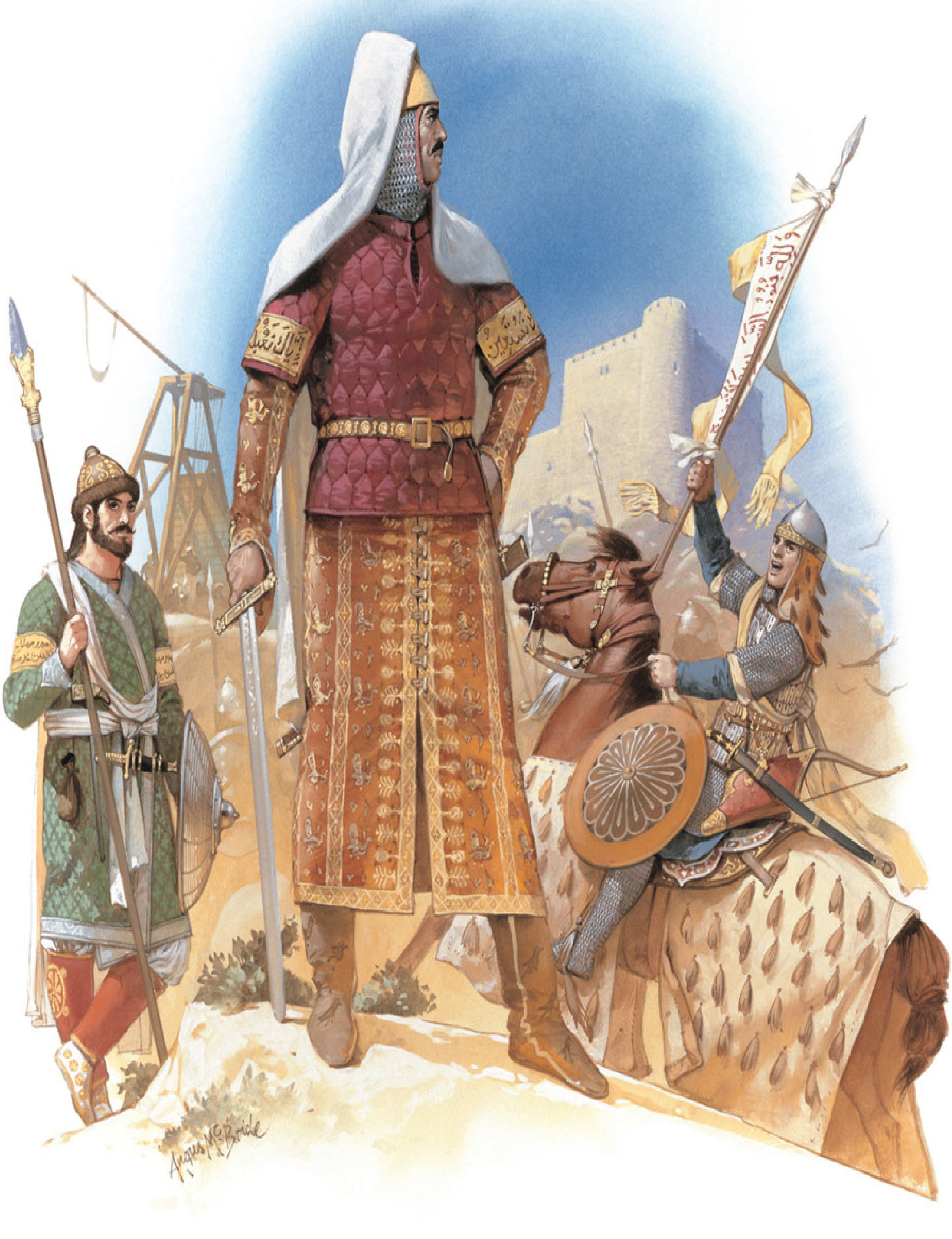
Artwork by Angus McBride, from ELI 9: The Normans, by David Nicolle.

Following William of Normandy’s successful invasion of England from 1066 he and his heirs ruled both England and Normandy, but ‘riding two horses’ was always challenging. Henry II (1154–89) also inherited much wider French territories, but at the end of the 12th century his weak son John ‘Soft-Sword’ lost Normandy to King Philip II of France.

Over 150 years the knight’s long mail hauberk, worn over a padded gambeson, had gained integral mitten gloves and separate mail stockings. Some helmets became dome-shaped, and some acquired complete protective face-masks. While true heraldic ‘coats of arms’ had yet to develop, some helmets and most shields were now being painted in identifying colours. Much fighting took place on foot, so big kite-shaped or rectangular shields, protecting a man from chin to shins, were still the norm. The ranks of the armoured knights had to be augmented with lower-class fighting men termed serjeants and vavassors, and there was increasing employment of paid mercenaries (stipendiarii) – both landless Normans, and foreigners. The right-hand figure is one of the latter, though his shield bears the arms of Normandy.

SALADIN

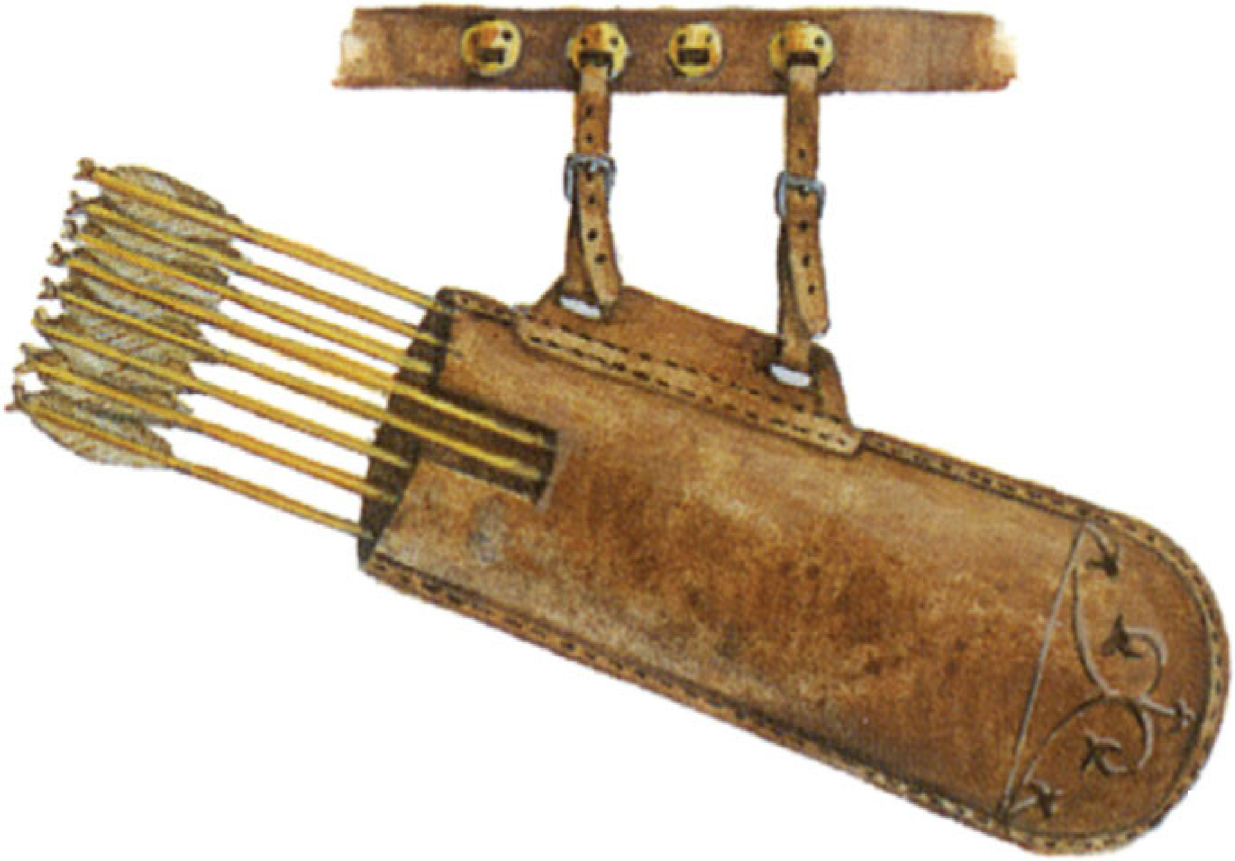
LATE 12TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 171: Saladin and the Saracens, by David Nicolle.

After the capture of Jerusalem by the First Crusade in 1099 the Europeans established ‘Crusader states’ in Palestine and Syria. Muslim disunity allowed these to survive for a century, until, in 1187, the great Kurdish general Salah al-Din led a multi-ethnic ‘Saracen’ army against them. Remembered in the West – as much for his wisdom and chivalry as his military skills – by the name ‘Saladin’, he slaughtered an army of the Crusader states at Hattin, and recaptured Jerusalem. During the Third Crusade (1189–92) King Richard I of England won some battles against him; but he never reached Jerusalem, and withdrew after concluding a peace agreement.

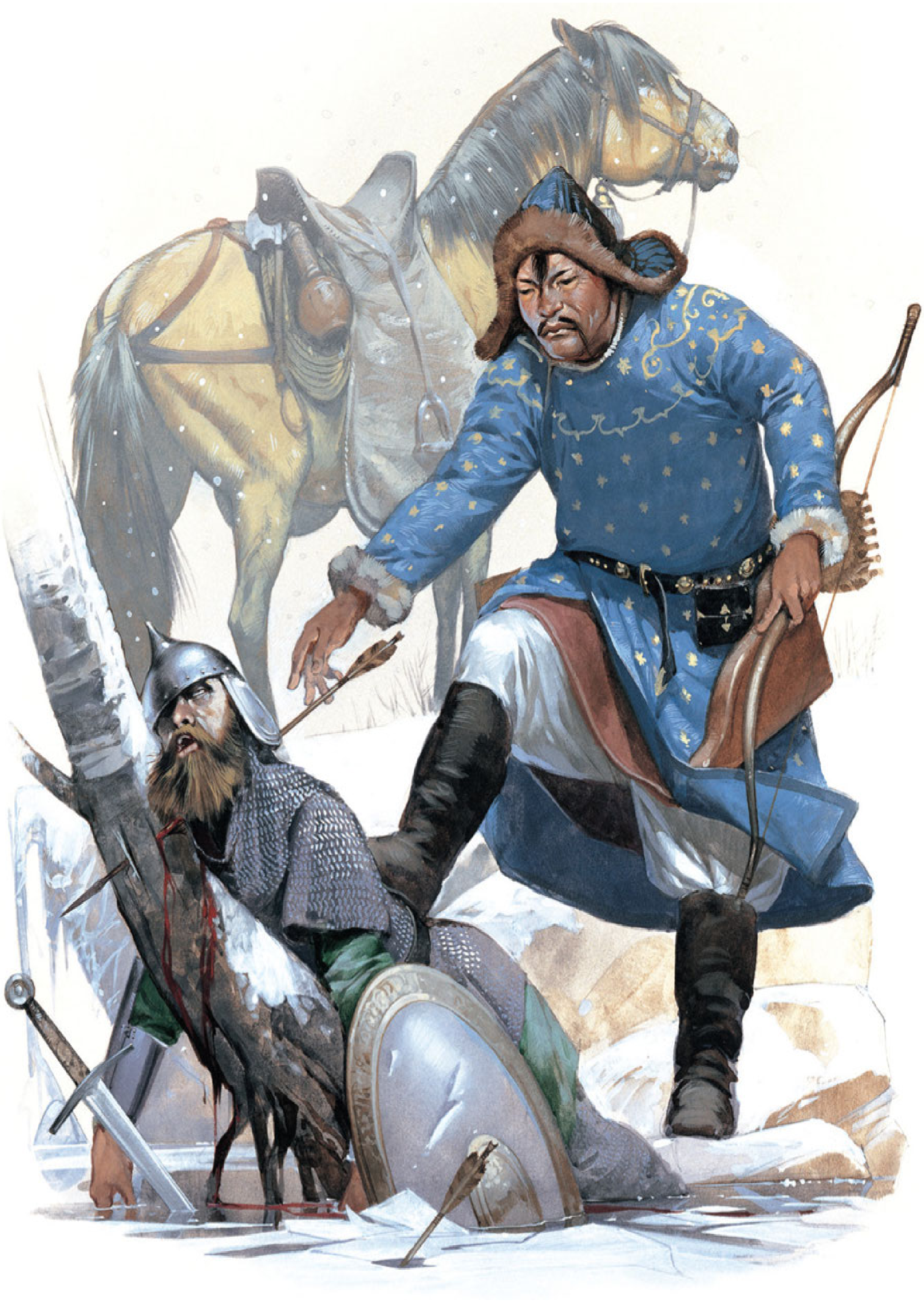
Over a richly gold-embroidered coat, Saladin (centre) is described as wearing a white shawl, a yellow cap over a ringmail hood, and a kazaghand – a quilted silk garment lined with ringmail. Most contemporary Muslim swords were straight, rather than curved sabres. The guardsman (left) wears no armour, and a mixture of Iranian and Turkish fashions plausible in this very diverse army. The heavy cavalryman (right), armed with lance, sword and bow, has a scale corselet over extensive ringmail armour; his horse is protected by thick felt barding.



Quiver of arrows belonging to a Turkish cavalryman, late 12th century. Artwork by Christa Hook, from WAR 10: Saracen Faris AD 1050–1250, by David Nicolle.

MONGOL LIGHT HORSEMAN

EARLY 13TH CENTURY



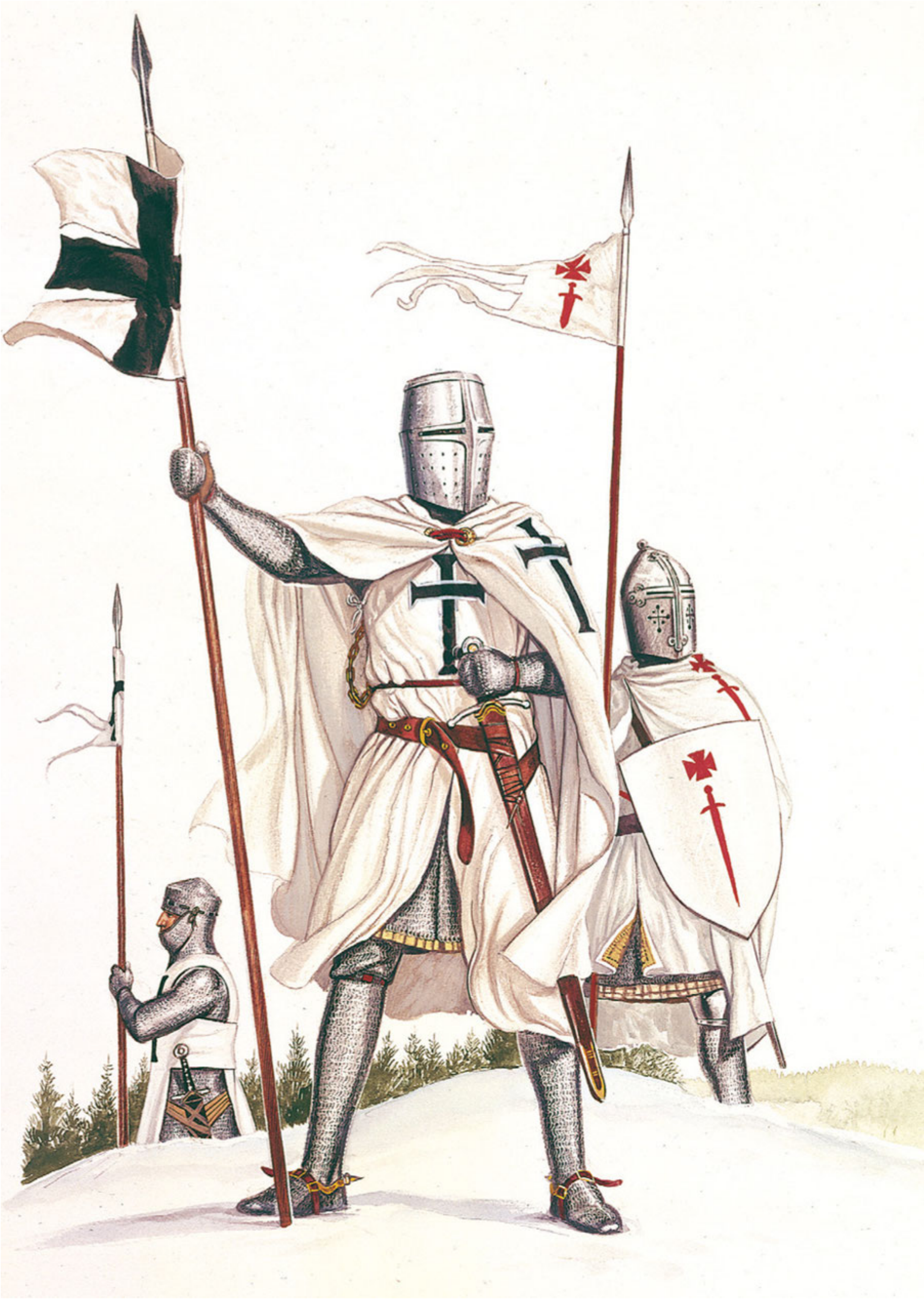
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 105: The Mongols, by Stephen Turnbull.

In 1206 the Mongolian military genius Genghis Khan, having unified the horse-nomads of the eastern Asian steppes, set out to conquer the known world – and he and his heirs came closer to that goal than any armies in history. The Mongols were bred to the saddle from early childhood; their hardiness, horsemanship and archery were unmatched, and in any season riders with strings of ponies could travel for many days on end, spreading the terror of their brutality before them. ‘Marching divided and fighting united’, within less than a century a series of highly organized cavalry armies had overrun China, Korea, the whole of Central Asia, Russia, the Muslim states stretching from the Caspian Sea to Iran, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Their only real failure was an attempted seaborne invasion of Japan.

Mongol armies contained a core of heavy, lamellar-armoured lancers for shock action, surrounded by thousands of light horse-archers – like this warrior, in Russia during the 1220s. His heavy winter coat is covered by a silk robe, perhaps looted during the conquest of the Muslim empire of Khwarizm. The case for a short, powerful composite bow and a long quiver are slung from his belt; and some carried swords and javelins.

TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

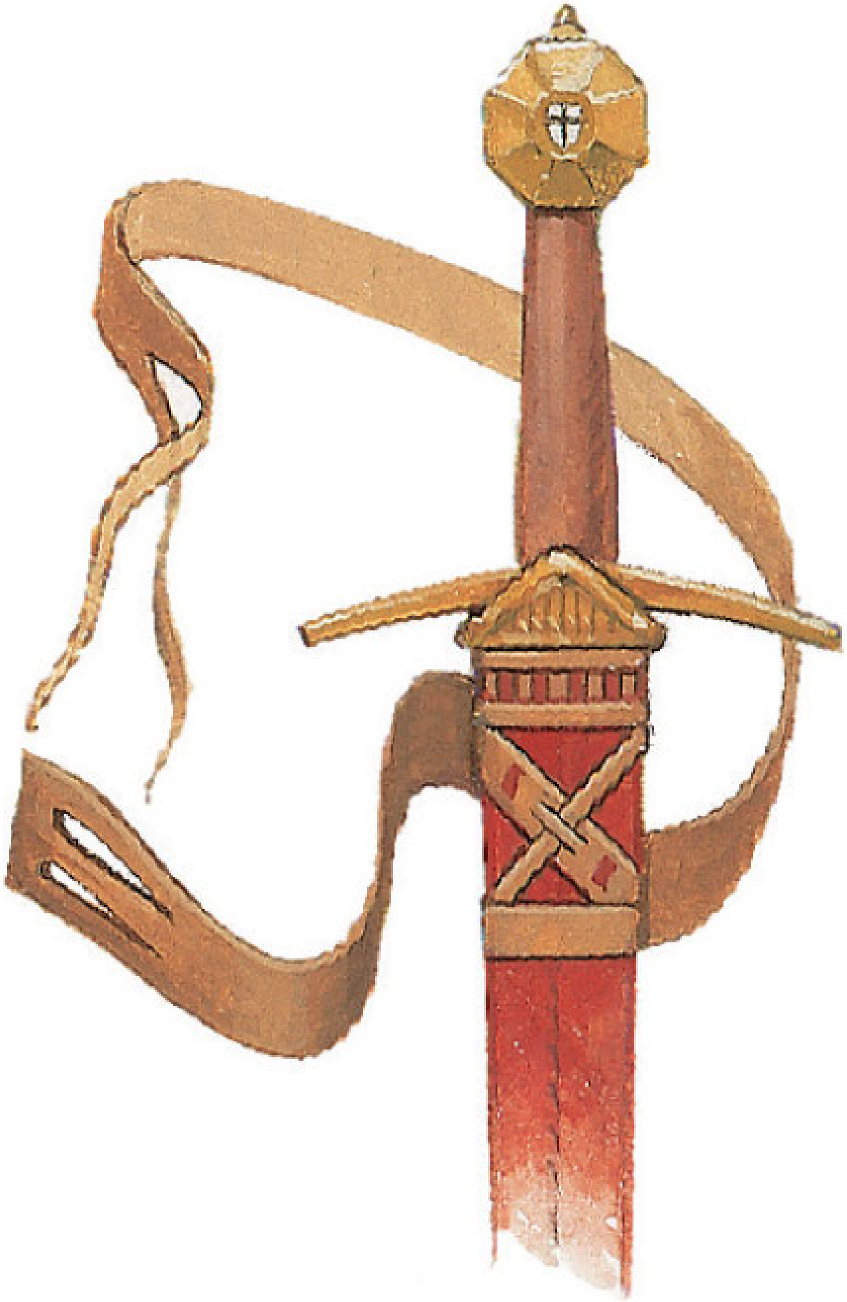
13TH–14TH CENTURIES



Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 75: Armies of the Crusades, by Terence Wise.

‘Crusades’ were not only wars against Muslims but any that were officially encouraged by the Church, against pagans or heretic Christians. The Deutschen Orden – one of the ‘knightly Orders’ which fought in the Holy Land, alongside the Templars and Hospitallers – was more prominent from the 1220s onward in wars against pagan Prussians and Lithuanians on the coast of the Baltic Sea. There the Order built harbours and castles from which they ruled wide territories, given a more-or-less free hand by the Pope and the (German) Holy Roman Emperor.

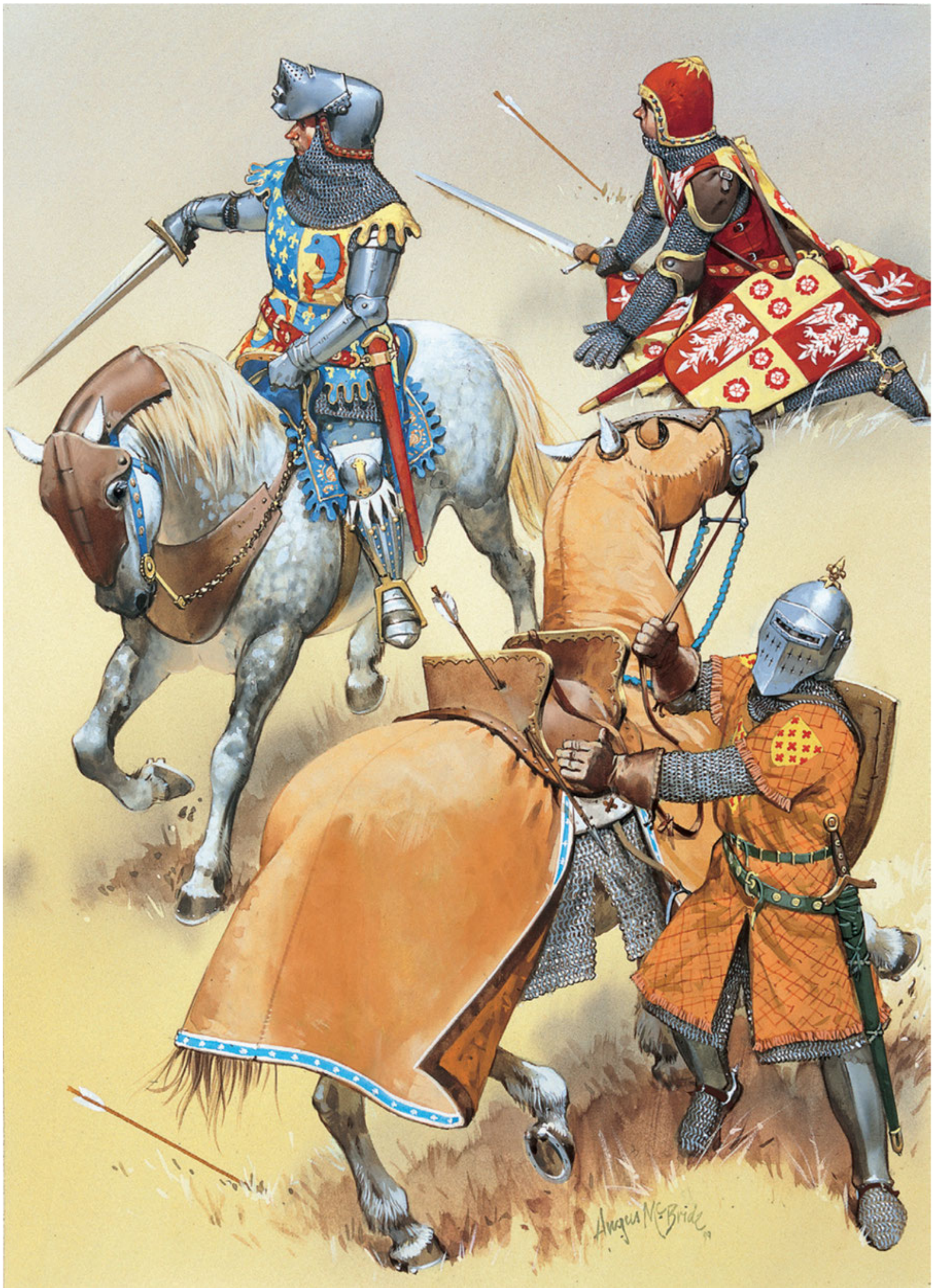
The custom of wearing surcoats with insignia seems to have started among crusaders, and the Teutonic Order wore a black cross on white (the red insignia, right, identify the subsidiary ‘Sword Brethren’, absorbed by the Order in 1238). By the mid 13th century a large, flat-topped ‘great helm’, with a cross-shaped reinforcement and piercings over the face for ventilation, was normally worn over a padded arming-cap and the mail coif, and ringmail now extended over the feet. In the 14th century an extra layer of body-armour was added; this coat-of-plates was a roughly T-shaped cloth ‘poncho’ with a hole for the head. Incorporating medium-sized iron plates, it wrapped around the sides and back of the torso (left).



Detail of a sword hilt and scabbard attachment, 13th century. Artwork by Graham Turner, from WAR 124: Teutonic Knight 1190–1561, by David Nicolle.

FRENCH KNIGHTS

MID 14TH CENTURY


Angus McBride 94

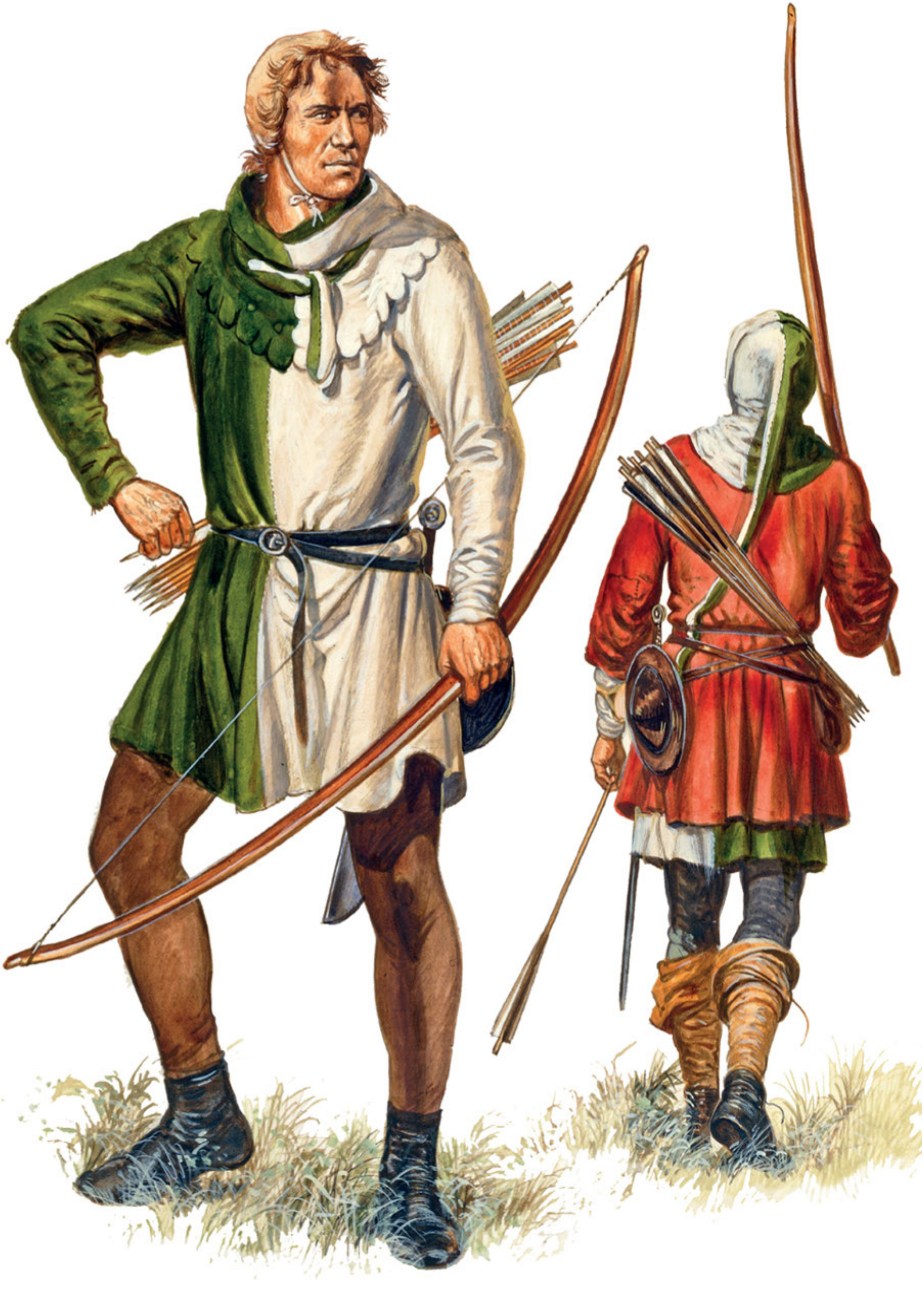
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 337: French Armies of the Hundred Years War, by David Nicolle.

These knights of the 1340s–50s have been halted by English arrows during an encounter in the early part of the Hundred Years' War. War-arrows could penetrate ringmail and, more importantly, bring down a knight's horse. Horse-armour of hardened leather, mail or padded cloth was now employed, and the knight's ringmail was being additionally reinforced with plate defences over the limbs. 'Great helms' were giving way to lighter, close-fitting bascinets with rounded surfaces to throw off blows and missiles, and movable visors over the face.

Heraldry had now developed: the Dauphin (top left), eldest son of the King of France, displays his personal 'arms' on a tight jupon over his coat-of-plates. His helmet is a so-called 'houndskull' bascinet with a pointed visor. A knight from south-eastern France (top right) shows north Italian elements: hard leather shoulder and elbow defences, and an open-faced helmet covered with velvet. His arms are shown on a loose heraldic tabard worn over his red-covered coat-of-plates, and on a shield that is cut-out in the top right corner to take his couched lance. A man-at-arms from the Pyrenean borderlands (bottom right) still has old-fashioned armour, though with added plate greaves, and his helm has a hinged visor.

WELSH AND ENGLISH ARCHERS

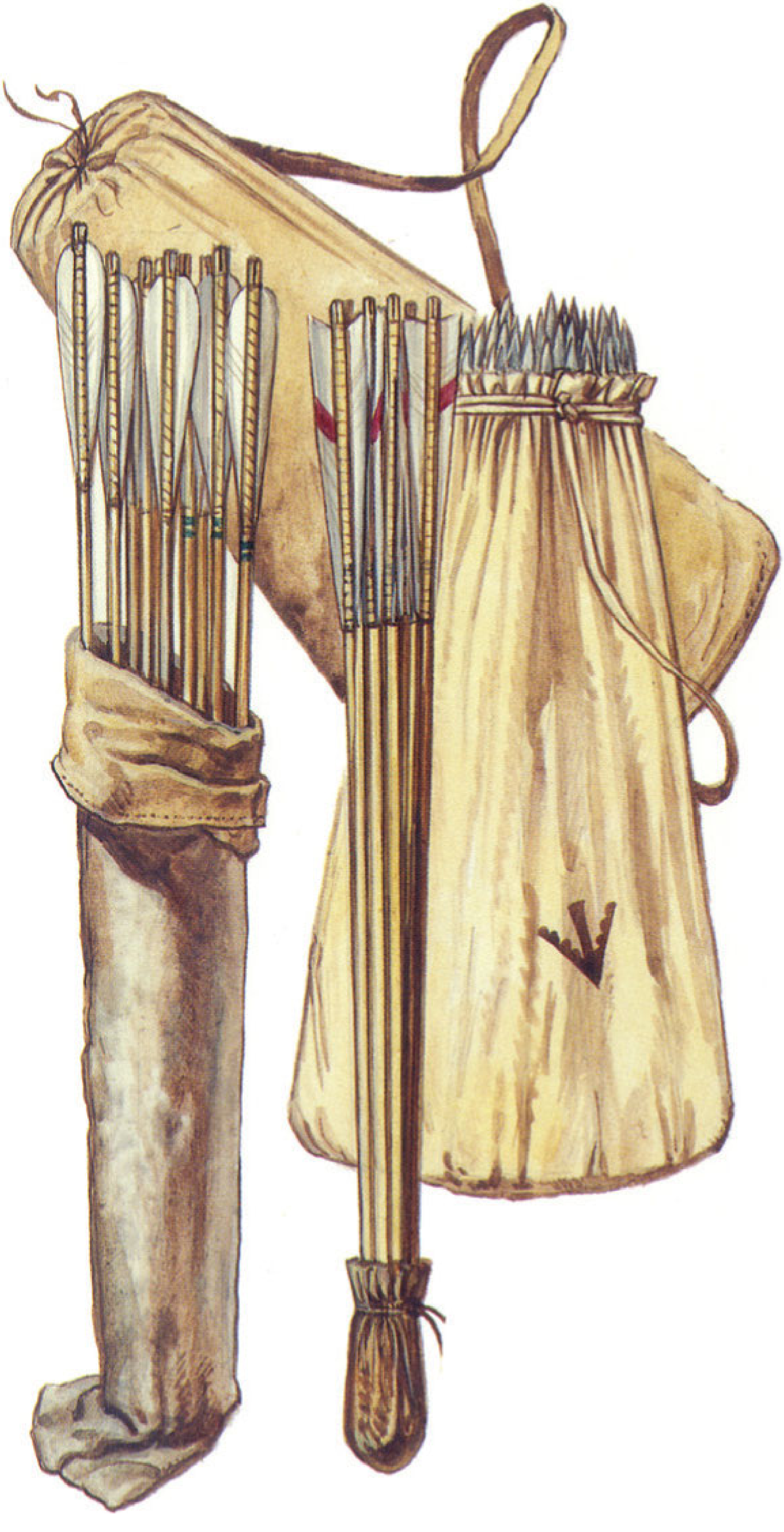
MID 14TH CENTURY



Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from WAR 11: English Longbowman 1130–1515, by Clive Bartlett.

The armies led to France by King Edward III and his son the ‘Black Prince’ made up for their relatively fewer armoured cavalry by including thousands of peasant and yeomen archers. Trained up from childhood to the strength and skill to use the powerful yew-wood longbow with deadly effect, in time of war they were enlisted for 6 pence a day – then a high wage. The ‘Goddamn with his crooked stick’, drawn up en masse to take advantage of defensive terrain around a hard core of armoured knights fighting on foot, defeated the charges of France’s armoured nobility on battlefields such as Crècy and Poitiers in the 1340s–50s, and Agincourt in 1415. They could shoot up to ten times in a minute, so 5,000 or more archers could fill the sky out to ranges of about 200 yards, creating a deadly ‘beaten zone’.

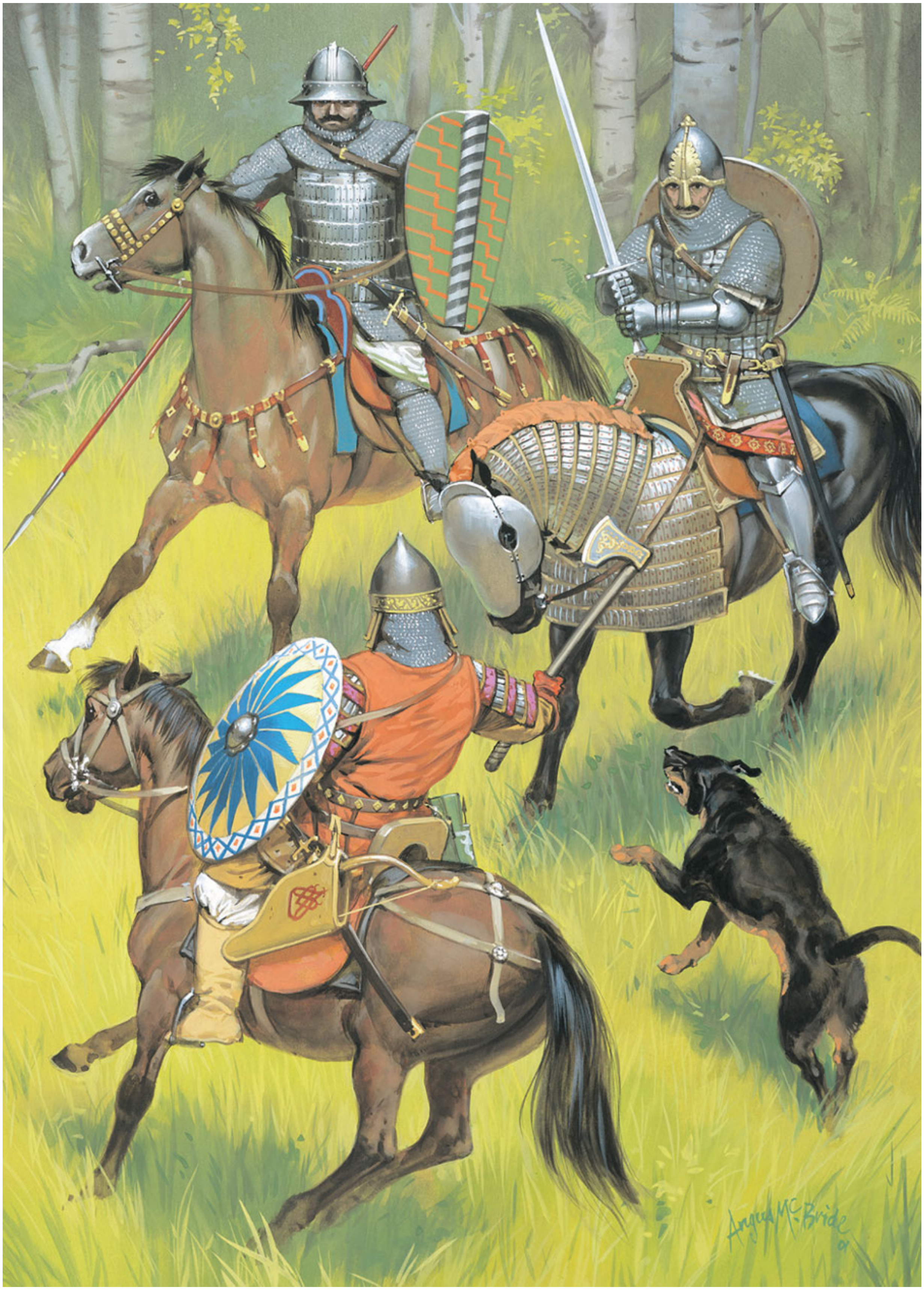
14th-century archers wore no armour, but carried sidearms – such as swords and small ‘buckler’ fist-shields – in case the fighting came down to close quarters. They were now starting to be given clothing in their lords’ colours (‘livery’); for example, this coat and hood halved in green and white identified elite bowmen from Flint and Cheshire. The woollen caped hood with its long, falling ‘liripipe’ was comfortable and practical in bad weather.



Arrow bags as supplied to 14th century English archers.

WESTERN RUSSIAN CAVALRY

MID/LATE 14TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

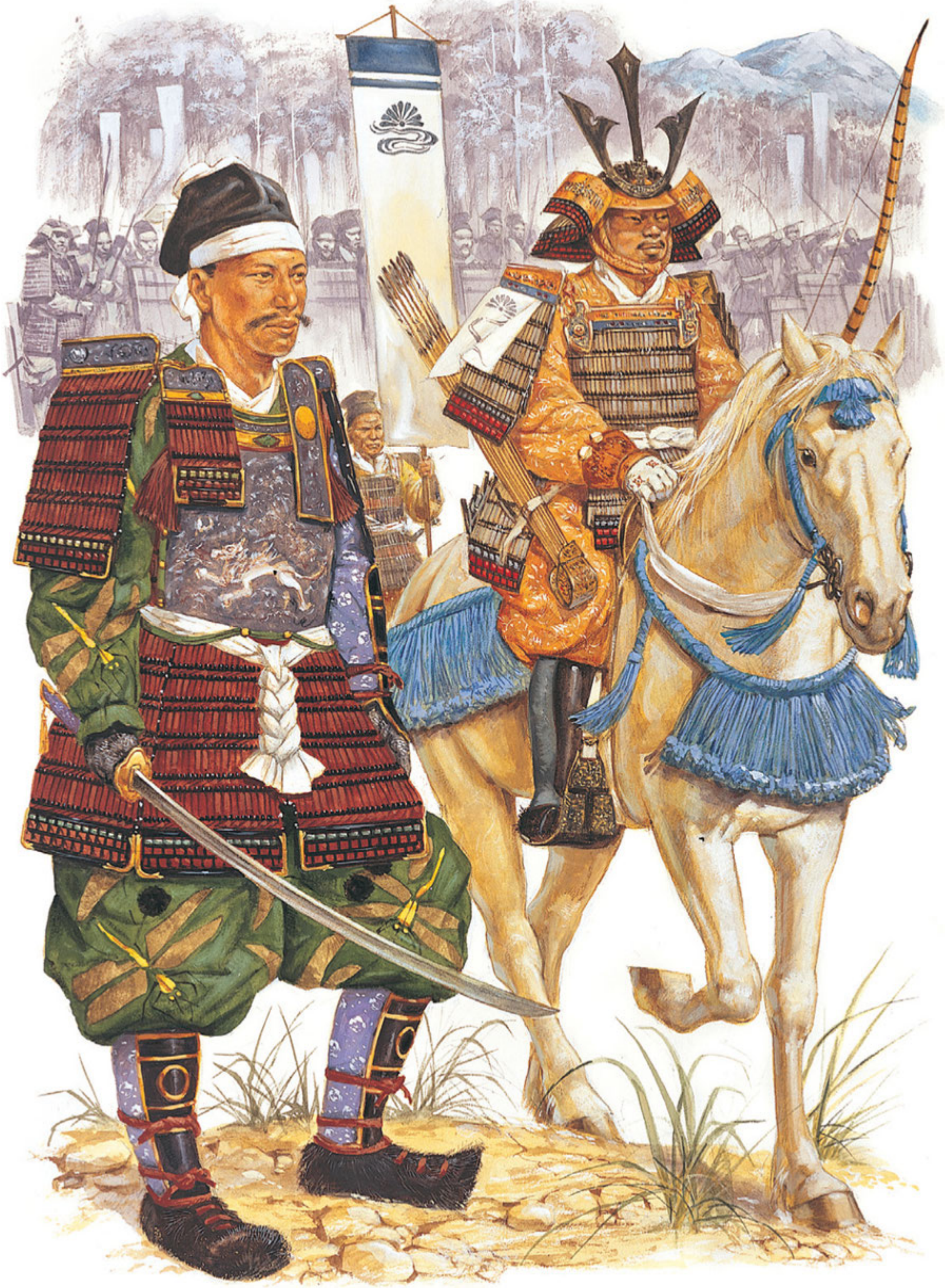
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 367: Medieval Russian Armies 1250–1500, by V Shpakovsky and D Nicolle.

During a time of turmoil among the rival principalities of western Russia, Moscow was rising to dominance. These struggles were accompanied by wars against an expanding Lithuanian-Polish state to the west, and rebellions against the occupying Mongol 'Golden Horde' from the east. Inevitably, this period saw wide variations in war gear, with copying from Western European styles alongside elements inherited from the steppe peoples.

The most noticeable of the latter was the lamellar armour corselet, worn in conjunction with ringmail (top left). This light cavalryman's flat-brimmed 'kettle helmet' is one variation of a style seen throughout Europe, but his pavise-style shield with a raised keel is Lithuanian. The elite heavy cavalryman (top right) has an archaic local type of helmet and a scale-armour corselet, while his horse's plate chamfron and lamellar neck protection are in the Turco-Mongolian tradition, but his plate limb defences and broadsword are European. By contrast, the armoured horse-archer from Novgorod (foreground) is entirely Turco-Mongol in appearance; he would wear scale-lined body-armour beneath his sleeveless tunic, and has lamellar upper-arm flaps, baggy trousers and soft leather boots.

JAPANESE NOBLEMEN

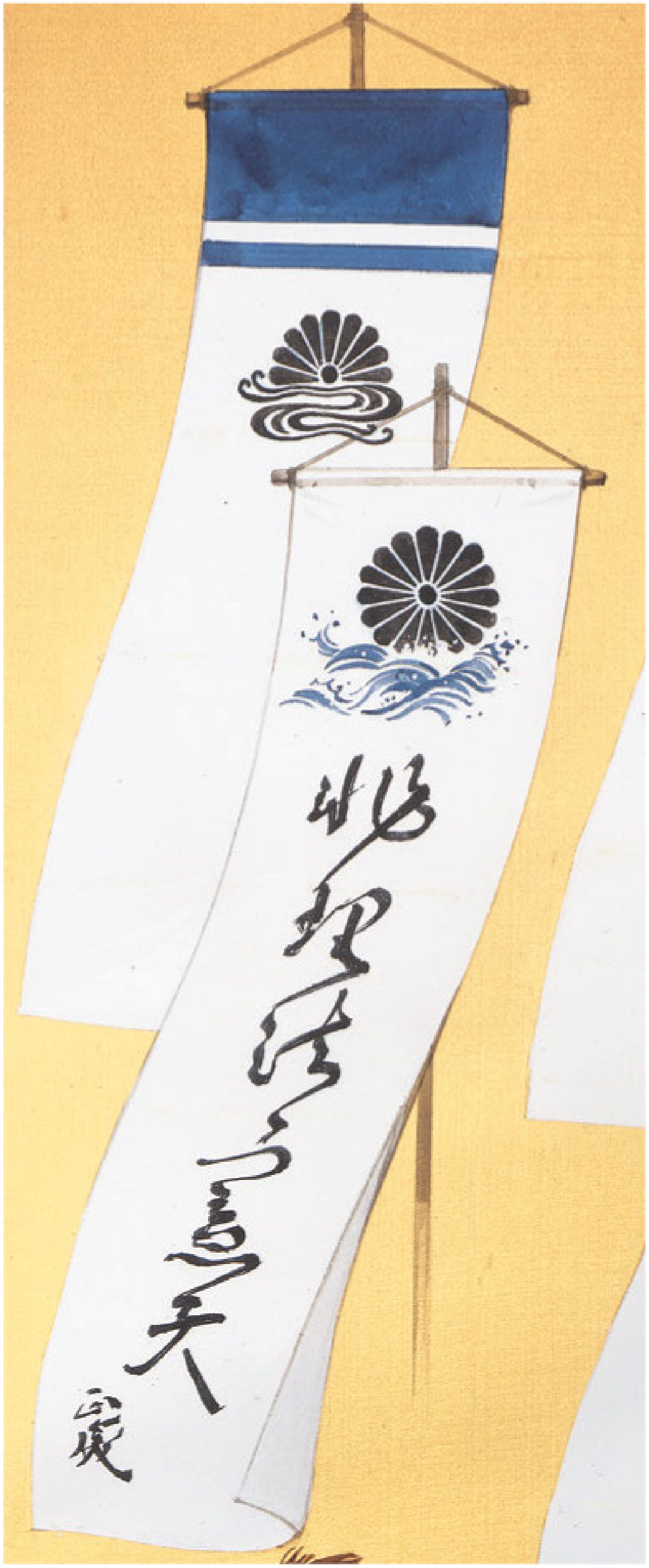
EARLY 14TH CENTURY



Artwork by Richard Hook, from ELI 125: Samurai Commanders (1), by Stephen Turnbull.

Over the medieval centuries Japan's samurai warrior class developed a distinctive style of armour. An iron helmet with back-curving side-guards often bore an elaborate identifying crest. A plate cuirass was supplemented by suspended shoulder and skirt panels of lamellar construction with prominent cord lacing; the cords were sometimes subtly coloured, and the iron was lacquered for rust-protection and decoration. The arms were protected by mail-lined sleeves with plate additions or separate forearm-guards, the hands by mail mittens, the shins by iron greaves, and the feet, traditionally, by bearskin boots.

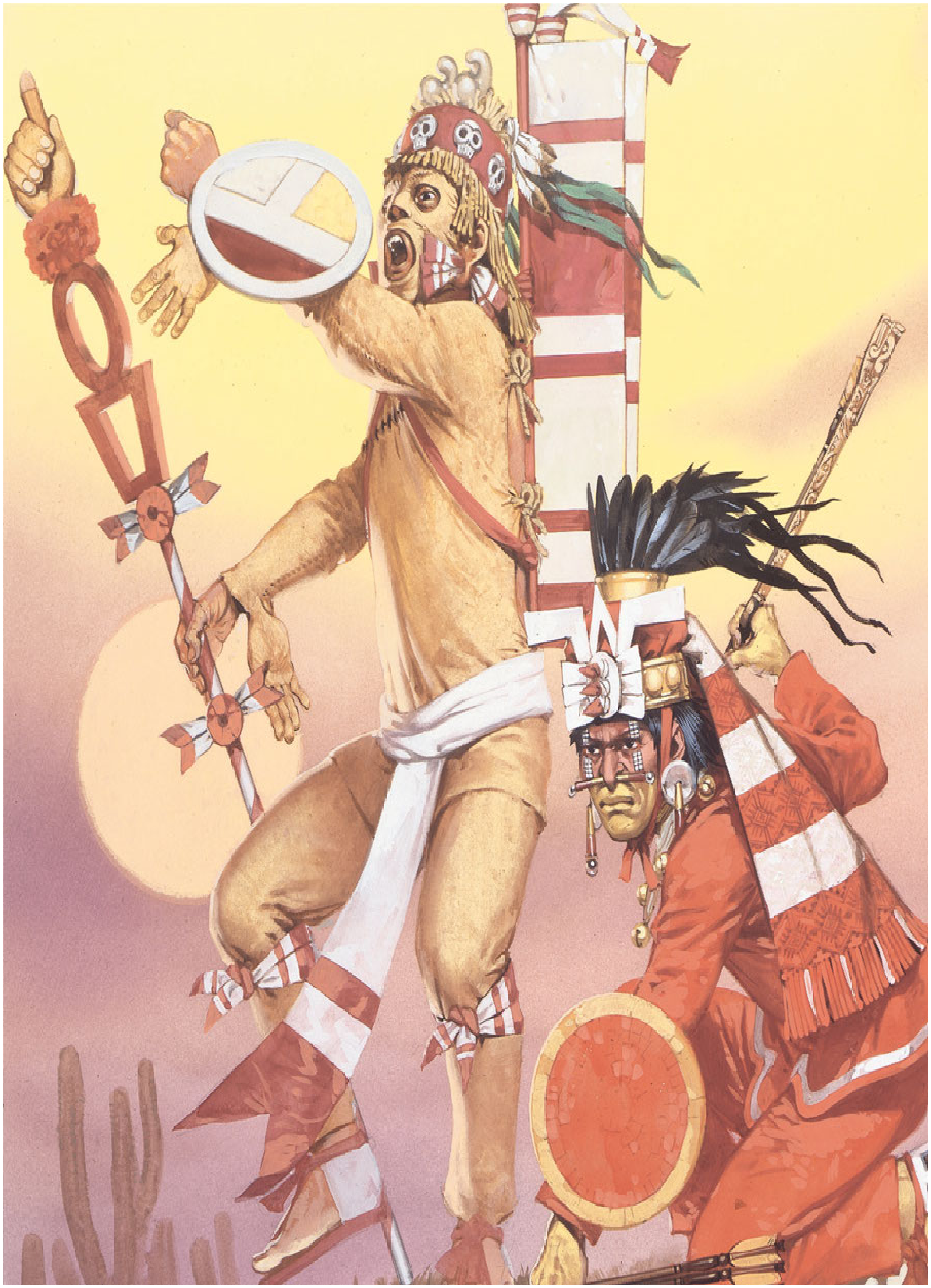
These resplendent examples are two samurai commanders of the 14th-century Nanbokujo Wars, when the Emperor Go Daigo tried to wrest back power from the shogun (national warlord). Over richly decorated silk clothing, Nitta Yoshisada (left) wears a classical armour featuring a beautifully decorated leather-covered breastplate, and holds a superbly forged katana sword. His silk cap will pad his helmet; that worn by the mounted Kusunoki Masashige (right) bears a crest representing a sword between two antlers. Archery was central to the samurais' traditional 'way of the warrior' – bushido.


非理法権天
正成

Flags of Kusunoki Masashige (1294–1336). Artwork by Angus McBride, from ELI 82: Samurai Heraldry, by Stephen Turnbull.

ZAPOTEC WARRIORS, MEXICO

15TH CENTURY



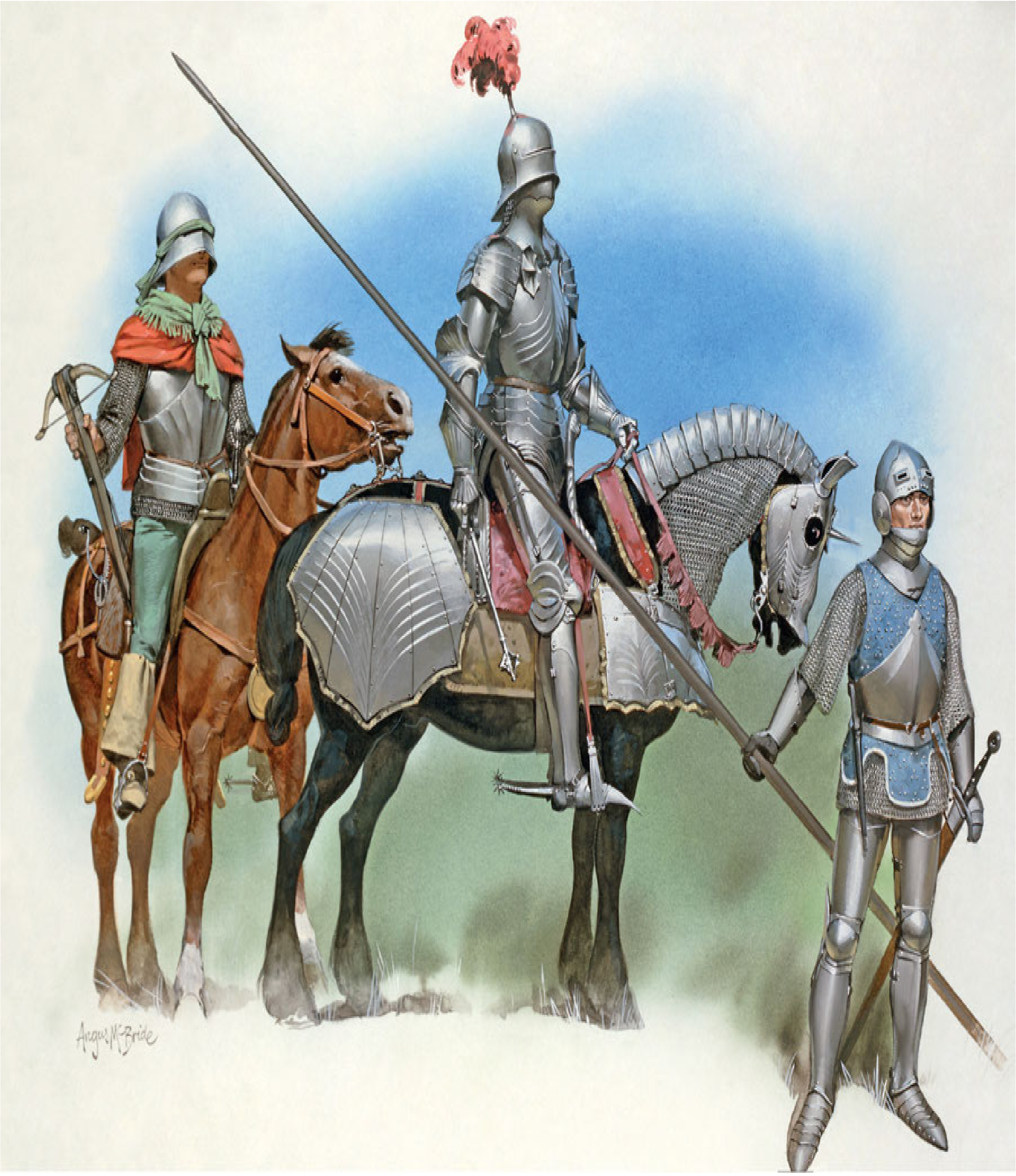
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 239: Aztec, Mixtec and Zapotec Armies, by John M D Pohl.

Pre-Spanish conquest Mexico was a land of rival states, whose priestly dynasties pursued power and wealth by a combination of diplomacy and war. In the 15th century an Aztec alliance of the cities of Tenochtitlàn, Texcoco and Tacuba was dominant. Under the Mexica king Motecuhzoma I (‘Montezuma’), they pursued relentless expansionist warfare, including against the Mixtec and Zapotec peoples of the gold-rich Oaxaca region. The Mexica army was assembled from regional clan units around a core of elite regiments, led by a hierarchy of noblemen (see here). Extorting food from subject communities and the inhabitants of enemy territory, forces tens of thousands strong conducted lengthy and far-reaching field campaigns and sieges.

Directed by drum-signals, Meso-American warriors fought in units distinguished by colourful clothing and complex ‘heraldry’, and protected by quilted cloth body-armour; their weapons were javelins, spears, hardwood clubs edged with obsidian blades, and bows. Capturing enemies for sacrifice was often a major goal in combat; this Zapotec officer-priest from Zaachila (left) is actually wearing the flayed skin of one of these unlucky prisoners.

CROSSBOWMAN, KNIGHT AND PIKEMAN

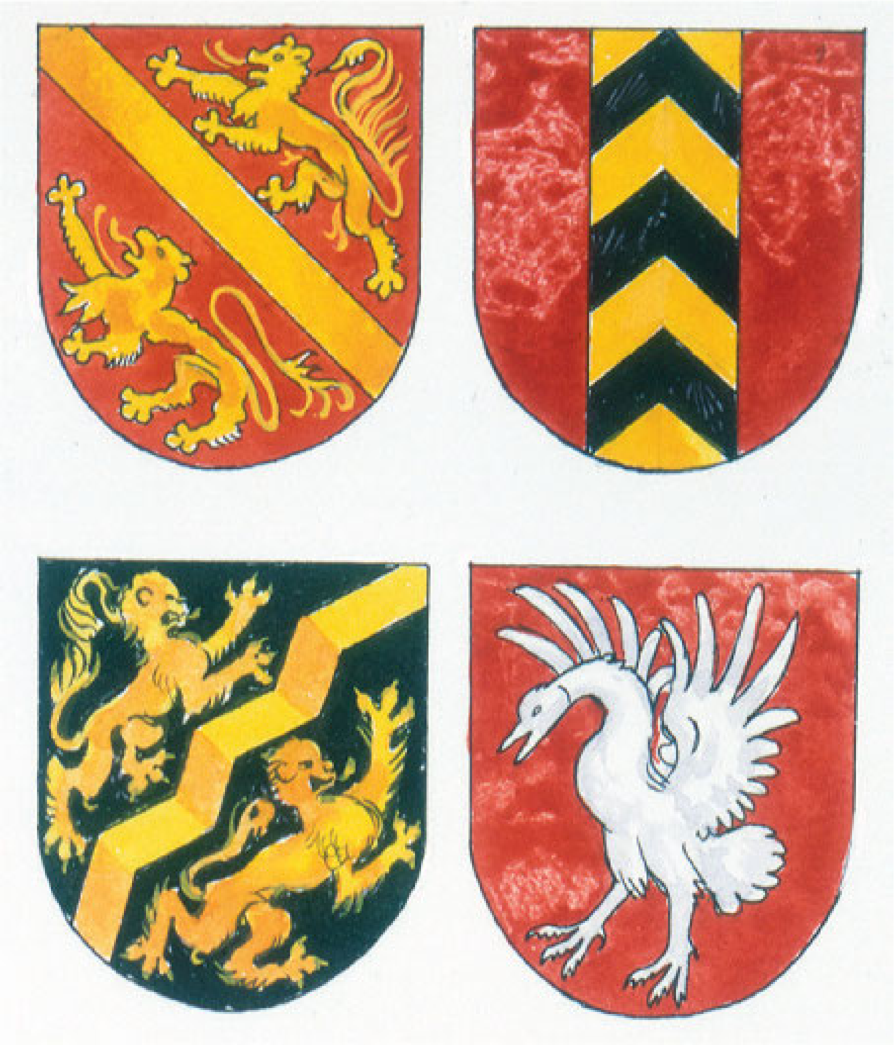
LATE 15TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 166: German Medieval Armies 1300–1500, by Christopher Gravett.

These varied types are typical of late 15th-century armies in the Holy Roman (Austro-German) Empire, at a period when monarchs routinely employed mercenaries to supplement the retinues of their local nobility.

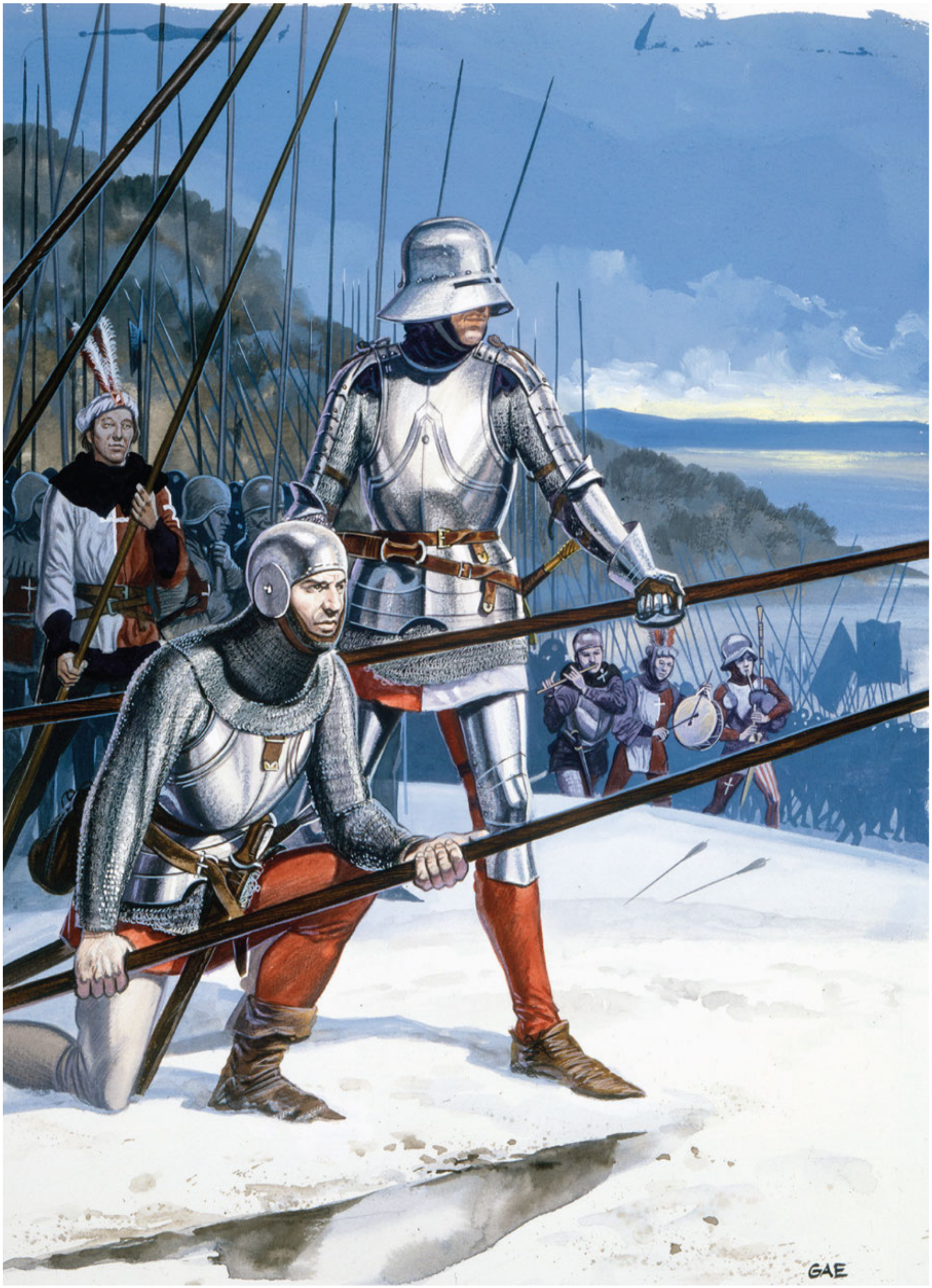
Archers were now wearing some mail and plate protection. The need to use mechanical devices made crossbows slow to reload, but they could penetrate plate armour at 50 yards’ range; some crossbowmen were mounted for mobility (left). The heavy armoured knight remained the military elite, and his very expensive armour had now reached such a peak of perfection that shields were unnecessary (centre). It was articulated so perfectly that it gave virtually complete protection against blades and points while still allowing freedom of movement. Its weight was well distributed, but heat and poor ventilation limited the time a man could fight without resting. This fluted and ridged style was typical of German manufacture, while Italian armours were smoother. For close foot combat this Flemish pikeman (right) wears complete armour of an Italian sallet helmet, ringmail, a canvas brigandine lined with small plates, and a plate cuirass and limb defences. If his pike is damaged or discarded he still has a sword and long dagger.



15th century coats of arms. Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 94: The Swiss at War 1300–1500, by Douglas Miller and Gerry Embleton.

SWISS PIKEMEN

15TH CENTURY


GAE

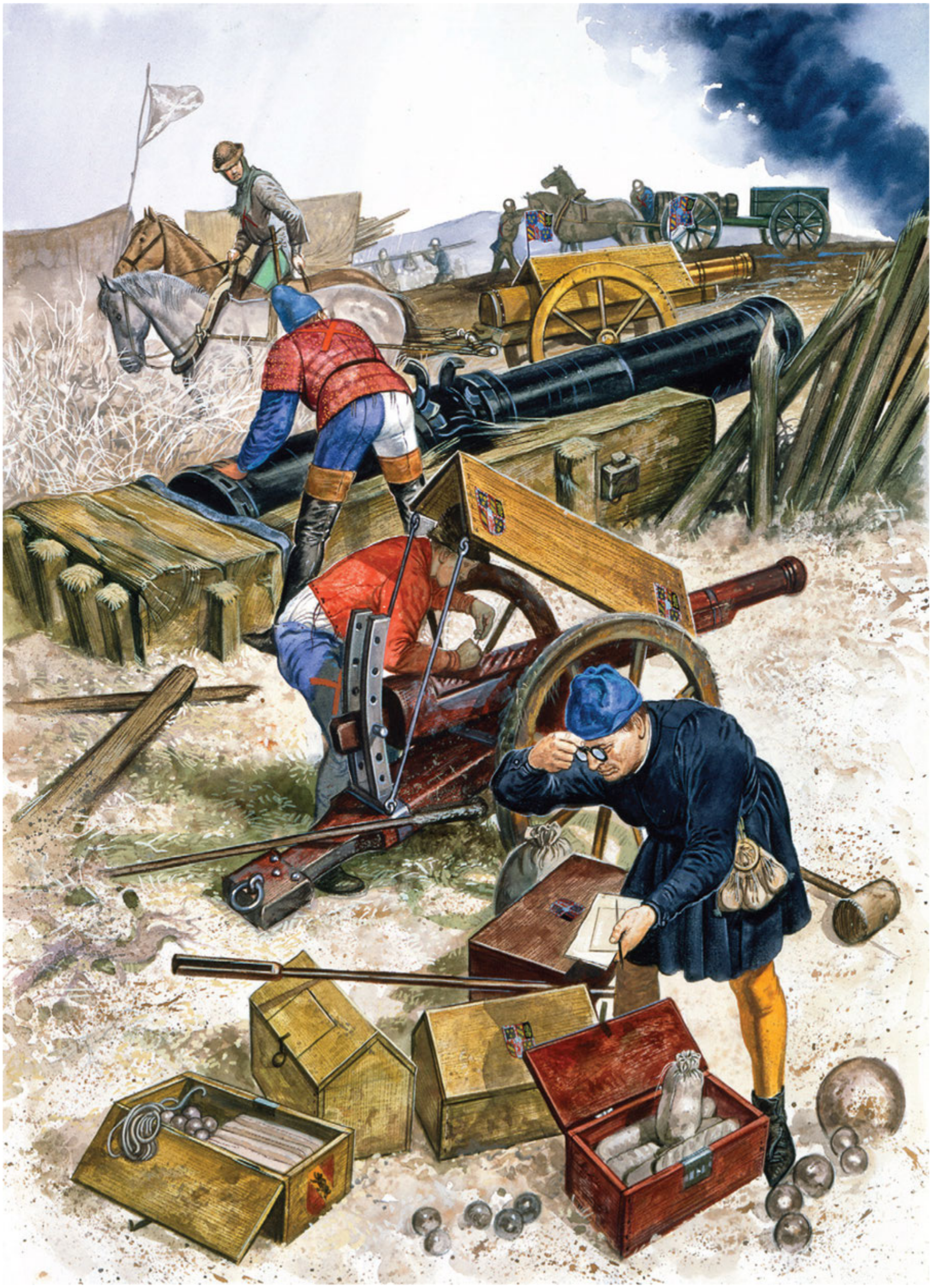
Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 94: The Swiss at War 1300–1500, by Douglas Miller and Gerry Embleton.

During the 14th–15th centuries the Swiss cantons successfully fought for their independence from the Habsburg monarchs of the Holy Roman Empire, and later from the Dukes of Burgundy. The Swiss had few armoured knights, but they evolved successful tactics for the massed use of infantry in terrain of their own choosing. Like the English archers before them, the Swiss pikemen would demonstrate that the mounted knight's dominance was drawing to a close.

From the mid 15th century Swiss armies were built around infantry formations up to 10,000 strong, of which the outer ranks were well-armoured men carrying long pikes. As in the ancient Macedonian phalanx, these unwieldy weapons demanded careful training. The formation could advance to the attack, but could only manoeuvre as a single block; individuals had to keep their relative position in the ranks to maintain the formation – thus the need for armour. Inside the pike 'walls', other men were armed with halberds, axes or long swords; these guarded the banners in the centre, but could also dart out to exploit any opportunity. Crossbowmen – and the first generation of hand-gunners – were also included, for skirmishing in open order.

BURGUNDIAN ARTILLERY

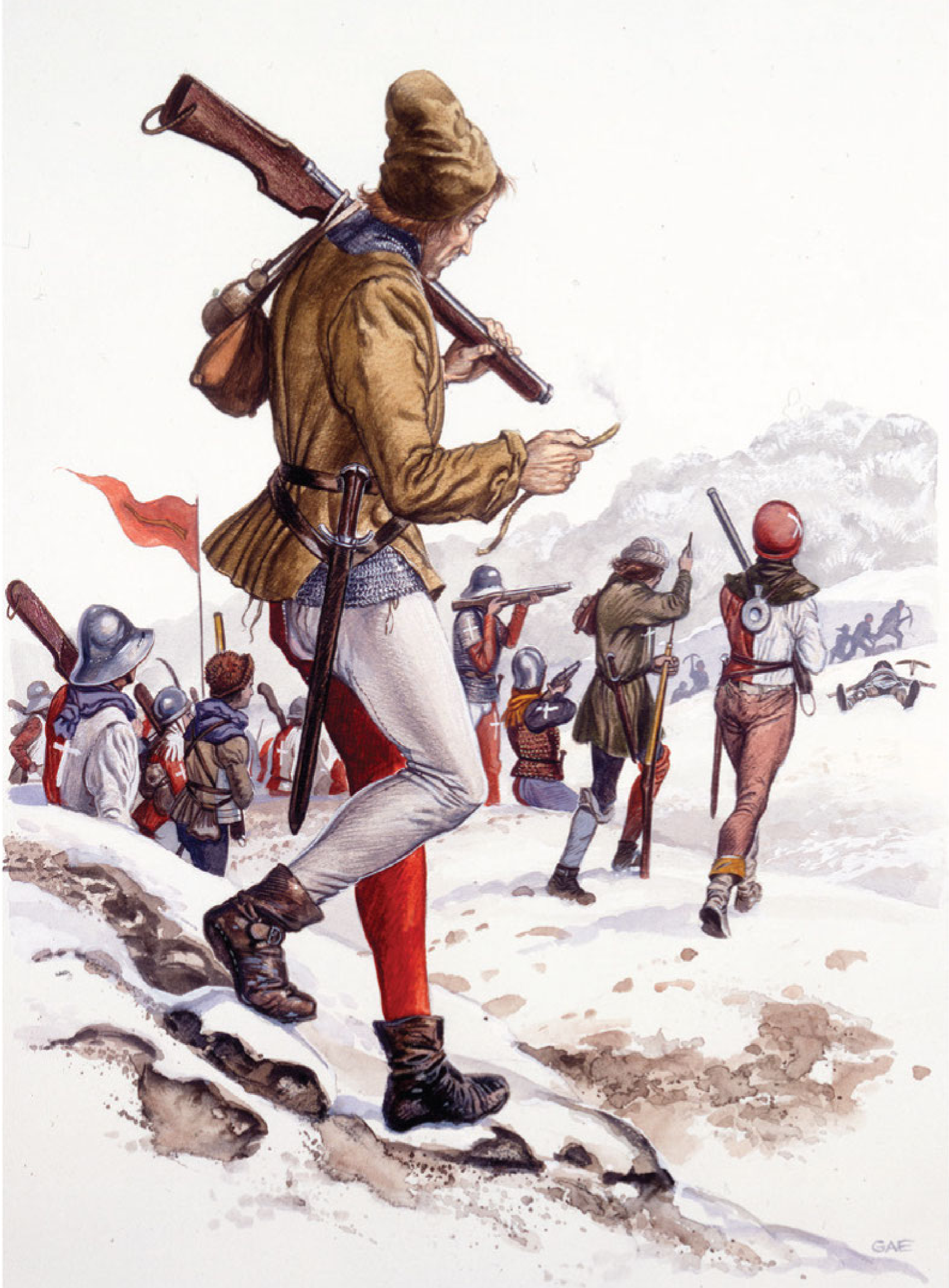
LATE 15TH CENTURY



Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 144: Armies of Medieval Burgundy 1364–1477, by Nicholas Michael.

This illustrates an important transitional stage in the history of military technology – the harnessing of gunpowder. The first European firearms dated from about 1320. By the 1470s, heavy cannon were sounding the death-knell of the stone castle, and the handgun – very inaccurate, but deadly to an armoured knight – was evolving from a novelty into a potentially battle-winning weapon. (As early as 1411 King John the Good of France had already bought 4,000 handguns for his infantry, and in the 1470s the Duke of Burgundy equipped one-third of his footsoldiers with them.)

Only the wealthiest monarchs could afford heavy, wall-smashing bombards (centre) firing carved stone balls of great weight, and the highly-paid specialists to operate them. It took many men and animals to transport and emplace them; once dug and wedged into a trench facing a castle wall they could hardly be adjusted for aim, and, being forged from separate iron staves and hoops, they all too often burst. But new, lighter, adjustable guns on horse-drawn wheeled carriages were now beginning to appear, like this serpentine (foreground), complete with cast iron balls and pre-measured powder-charge bags. These innovations saw the first glimmerings of true ‘field artillery’ tactics.


GAE

Handgunners of the Burgundian Wars. Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 94: The Swiss at War 1300–1500, by Douglas Miller and Gerry Embleton.

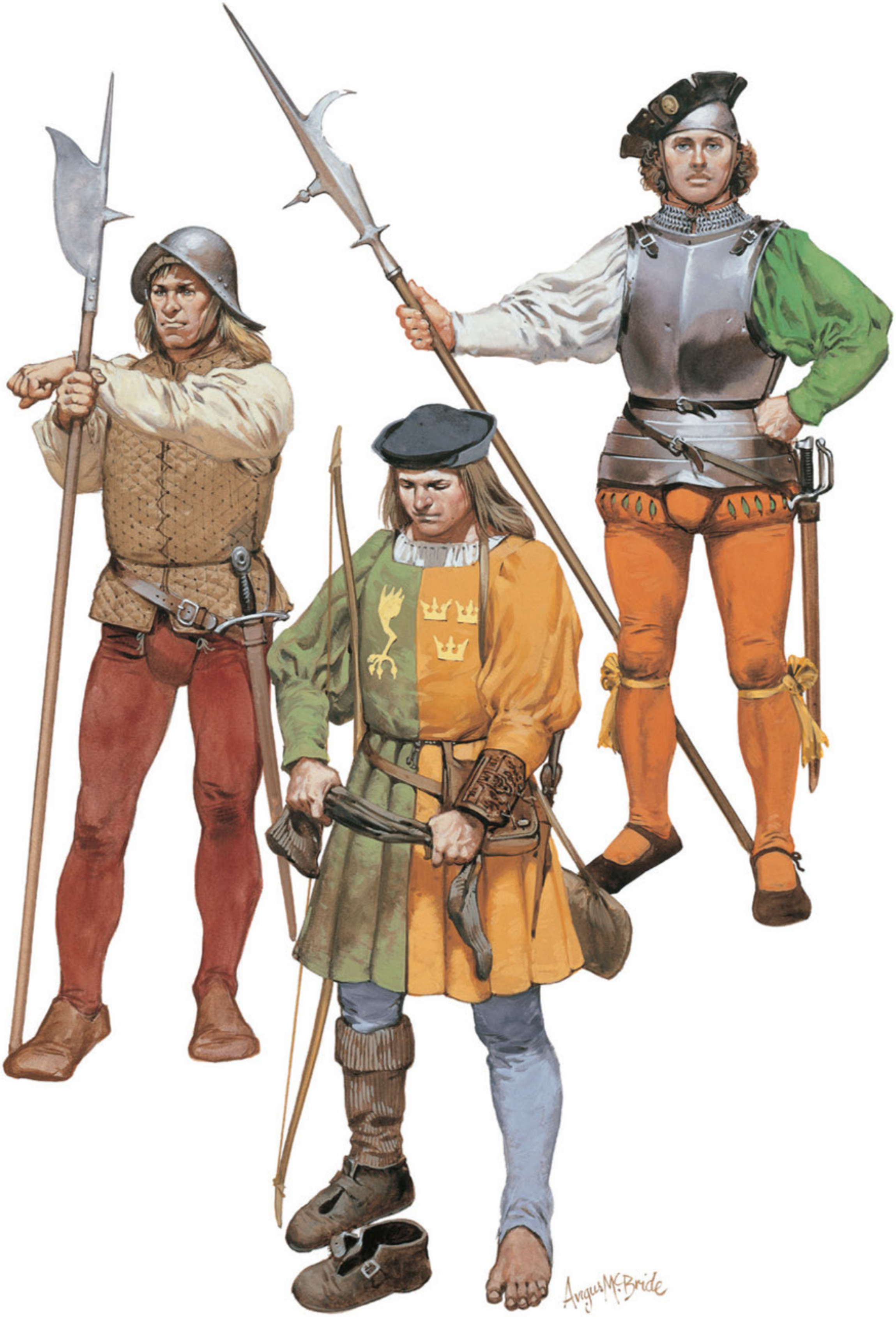
EARLY MODERN WARFARE

1500–1700

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 279: The Border Reivers, by Keith Durham (top); and by Gerry and Sam Embleton, from MAA 481: The Spanish Tercios 1536–1704, by Ignacio and Iván Notario López.

ENGLISH INFANTRY

EARLY 16TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

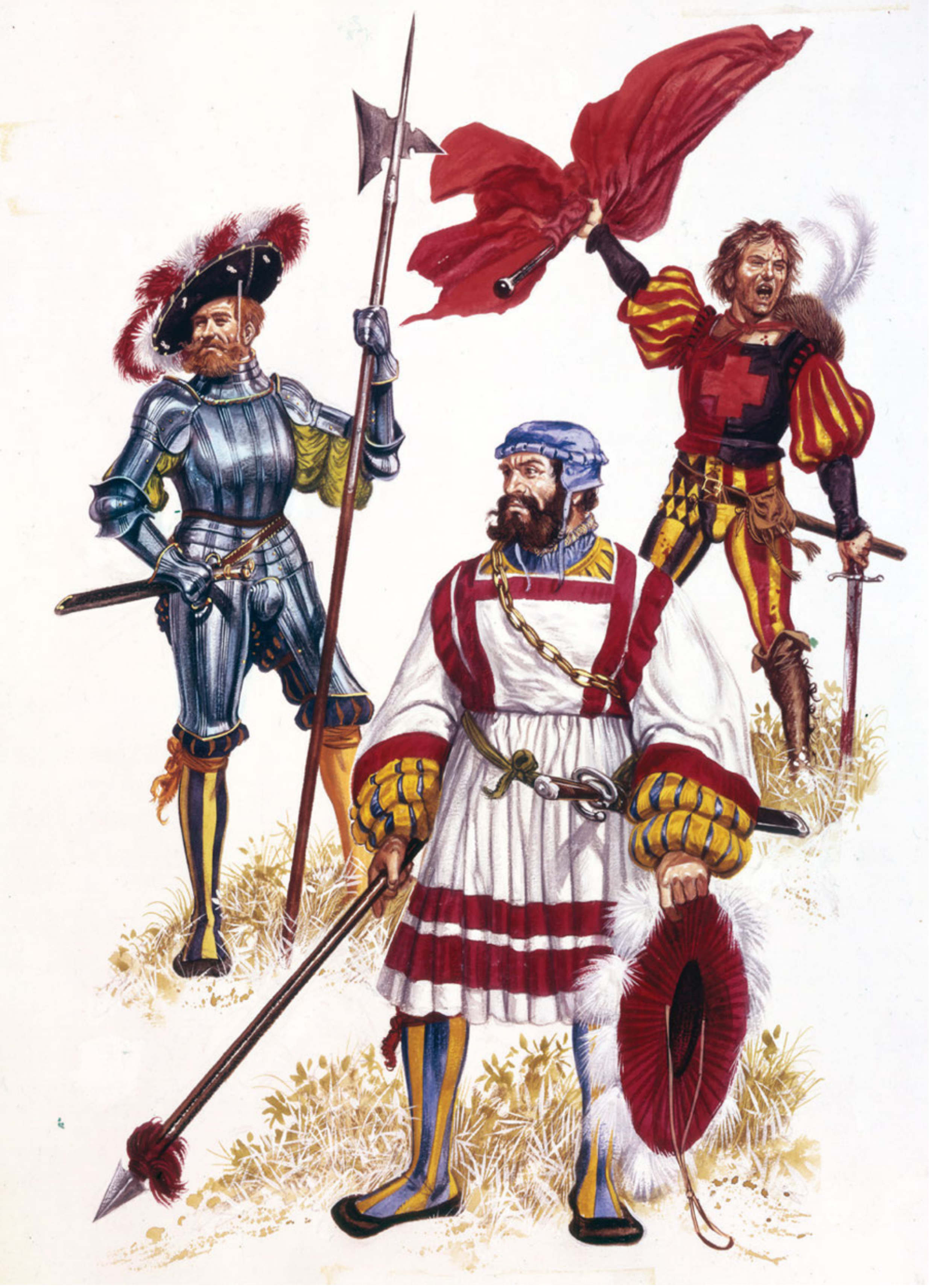
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 191: Henry VIII's Army, by Paul Cornish.

In 1485 Henry Tudor brought the English 'Wars of the Roses' to an end by his victory at Bosworth, and took the throne as King Henry VII. A generation later, while his son Henry VIII was absent on campaign in France in 1513, the Scottish King James IV took the opportunity to attack across the border, but at Flodden Field he was defeated and killed, with many of his nobles, by the Earl of Surrey's army.

Lagging behind Continental European innovations, the English had not yet adopted massed pikemen. Cannon had been acquired, mostly for siege work, but handguns were still limited to small numbers of foreign mercenaries. Around a core of armoured knights, and numerous archers with the traditional war-bow, the majority of the army were infantry armed with 'bills' – the English term for a variety of halberd-like pole weapons. A billman of the Earl of Surrey's contingent (top right), wearing clothes that are beginning to echo Continental fashions, has a cheap plate cuirass called an 'Almain rivet', imported in large numbers from Germany. Livery colours and family badges are displayed by one of Sir Edward Stanley's Lancashire archers (centre), who defeated the Highlanders on the Scots' right flank at Flodden.

GERMAN LANDSKNECHTS

EARLY 16TH CENTURY



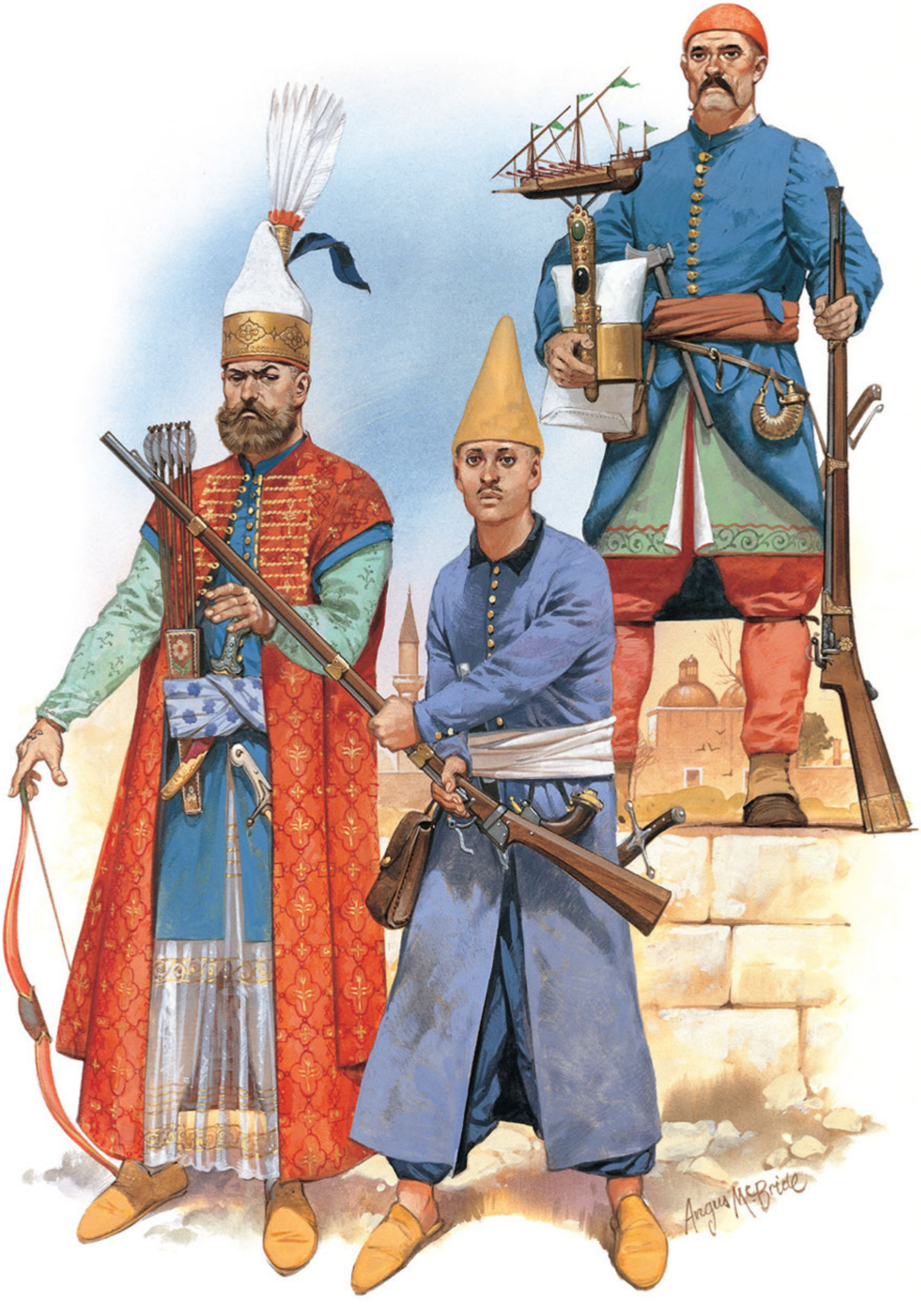
Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 58: The Landsknechts, by Douglas Miller.

The Habsburg Empire fought many wars throughout Europe, and large armies for long-distance campaigns could only be raised from paid, full-time professional soldiers. The great rivals to Swiss mercenary pikemen would be Imperial German troops known as Landsknechts; these first appeared in about 1490, and would flourish for nearly 50 years.

Mercenary commanders took contracts to recruit and lead well-organized regiments, under strict terms of employment. Those who earned good reputations had no difficulty finding either employers or soldiers. The main weapons were pikes, halberds and long swords, with a minority of crossbows soon being replaced by matchlock handguns (‘arquebuses’). Only officers and front-rank men wore armour, and plumed bonnets and colourfully ‘slashed and lined’ clothing became the trademark of the swaggering Landsknechts. The red cross was the Imperial field-sign; companies had identifying flags, and a red ‘blood banner’ was carried by those in the ‘forlorn hope’ (top right) – the most dangerously exposed position. A chain of office and short spear (centre) distinguished a Schultheiss, a military magistrate in charge of enforcing the strict disciplinary code.

OTTOMAN TURKISH JANISSARIES

LATE 16TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

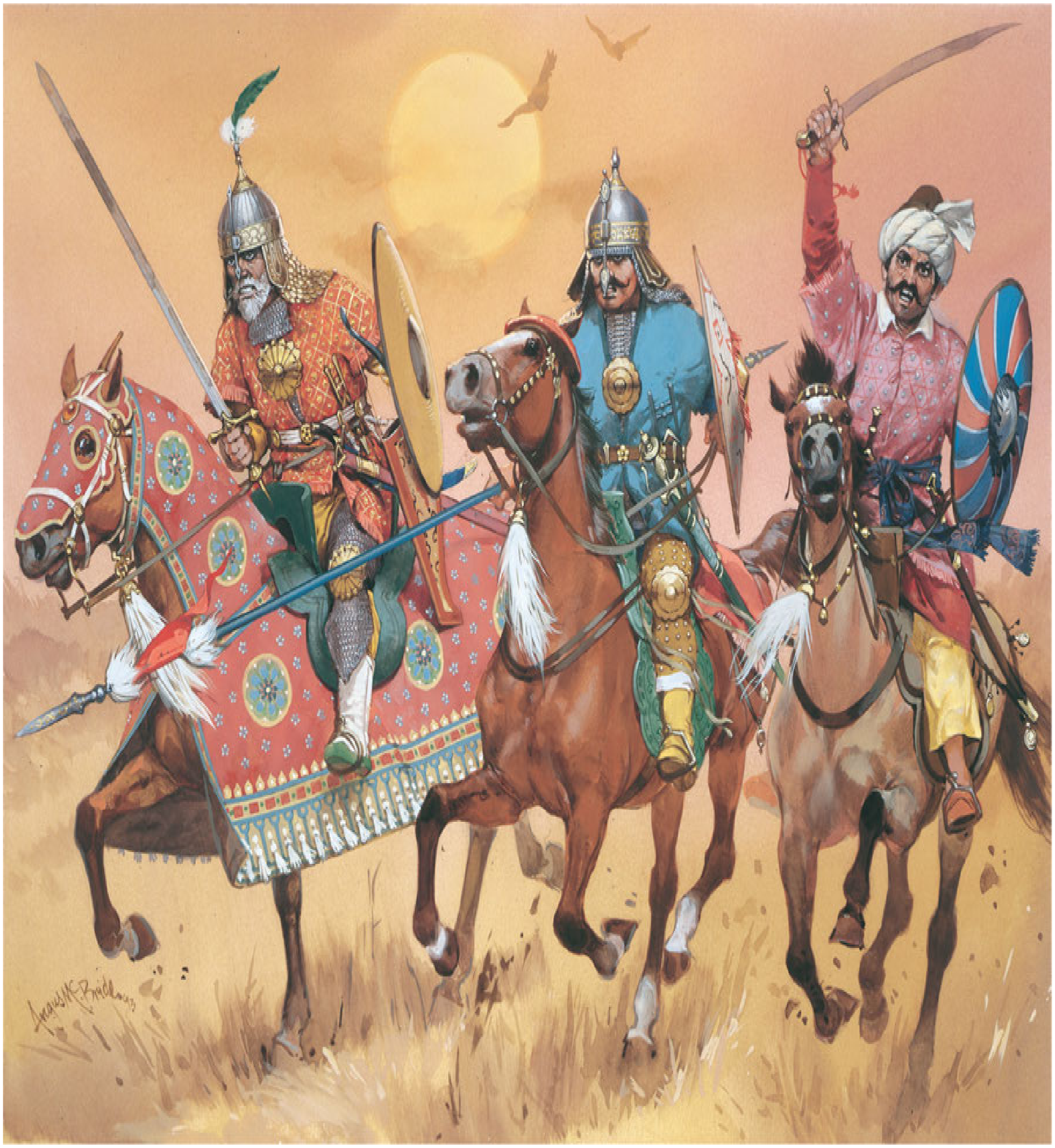
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 140: Armies of the Ottoman Turks 1300–1774, by David Nicolle.

By the 16th century the Ottoman Turkish empire was expanding to the north and west; it had swallowed up the Balkans and Hungary, and in 1529 it would even threaten Vienna. The Muslim sultans recruited widely among their vassal peoples, including many Christians; they embraced foreign innovations, and their armies were well organized, trained, disciplined and supplied. Alongside their traditional light cavalry the Ottomans built a sophisticated infantry and a strong artillery, and were skilled in siege work.

The paid Janissary infantry of the Kapikulu corps were elite royal units, originally recruited from prisoners of war. Now enlisted by annual quotas from Christian provinces, they accepted conversion to Islam, and were stationed in barracks around Istanbul. Under Sultan Suleyman I (r. 1520–66) they reached a peak of some 20,000 men, in uniformed, numbered regiments (ortas) with high esprit-de-corps. For formal parades their tall white caps bore unit crests; the model ship (right) identifies a marine regiment. The senior officer (left) parades with a now largely symbolic bow and arrows; during the 16th century the corps' bows, javelins and pole arms steadily gave way to the spring-loaded matchlock musket, carried here by a clumsy trainee (centre).

MUGHUL INDIAN CAVALRY

LATE 16TH CENTURY



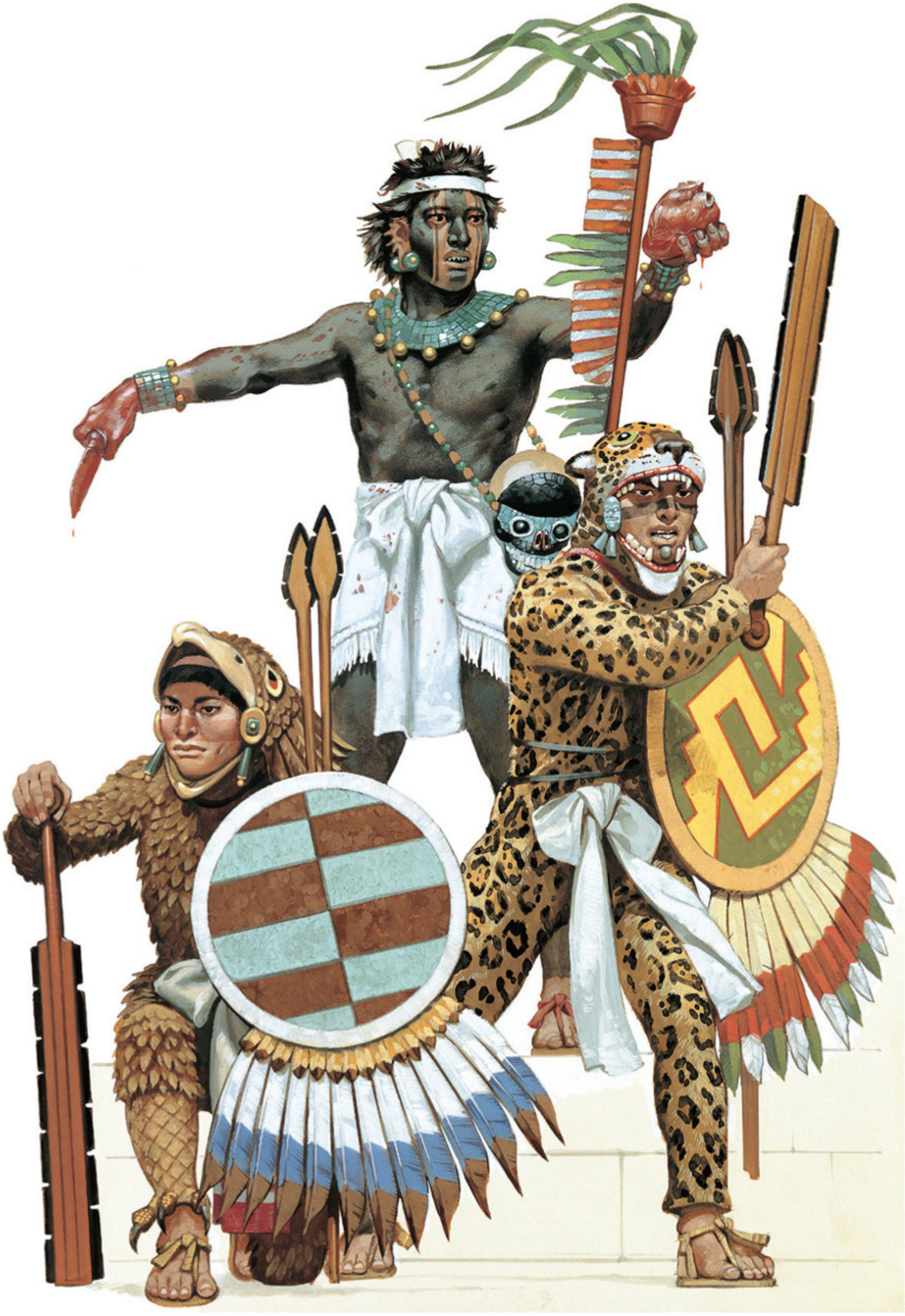
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 263: Mughul India 1504–1761, by David Nicolle.

The Muslim Indian dynasty of the Mughuls took its name from ‘Mongols’, since its founder, Babur (1482–1530), was of Turco-Mongol stock from Central Asia. Islam had reached India long before Babur captured Delhi in 1526, but by about 1600 his grandson Akbar had extended Muslim rule to include modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, northern and most of central India.

Akbar had an organized force of some 12,000 matchlock musketeers, built up a strong and varied artillery, and even managed to use war-elephants effectively, but the heart of his army consisted of cavalry. In this illustration both the splendidly equipped mansabdar officer (left) and his tabinan trooper (centre) wear combination cuirasses of mail with small plates, hidden by outer garments; the gilded nailheads on the officer’s coat betray its scale-armour lining, and he also has ringmail leg armour with gilded knee-protectors. He carries both archery equipment and two swords, one of them extraordinarily long. His trooper has similar if cheaper gear, including a light shield of spirally-wound cane, and carries a lance. The leader of tribal light cavalry (right) wears Turkish-influenced costume from his native Afghanistan, though his mail-lined kazarghand is more typical of the Middle East.

AZTEC ELITE WARRIORS

EARLY 16TH CENTURY



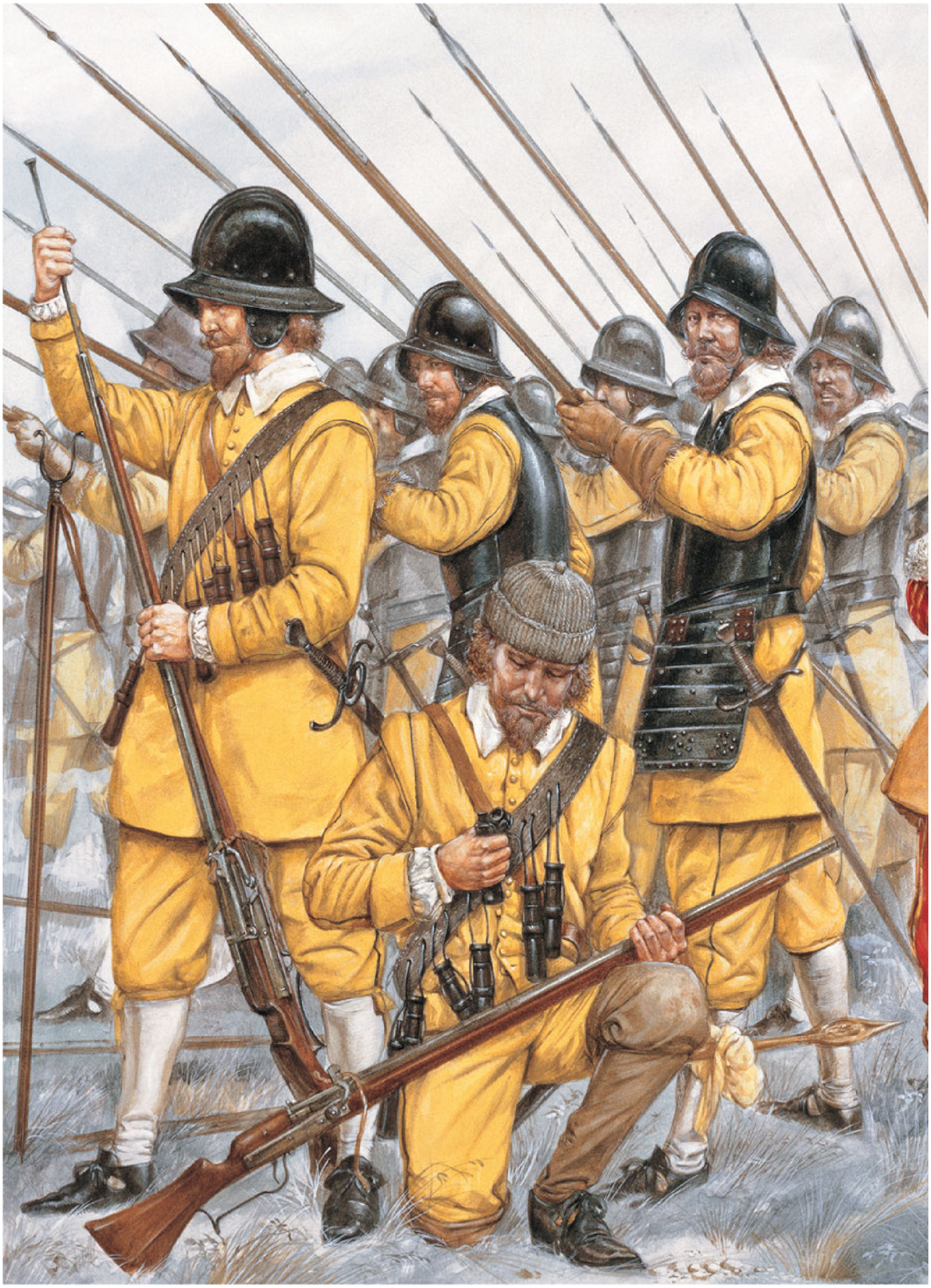
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 101: The Conquistadores, by Terence Wise.

Before Cortes and his little force of conquistadores landed in Mexico in 1519, Aztec armies were constantly at war with neighbouring peoples – to gather material tribute to feed the swollen population of Tenochtitlàn, and prisoners for sacrifice to their bloodthirsty god Huitzilpochtli (note the priest, top).

Aztec armies had a formal hierarchy and structure, and at the heart of assembled forces of peasant levies elite units were manned by warriors who had proved themselves in battle. These Eagle, Jaguar and Arrow 'knights' were distinguished by carved headdresses, and uniforms worn over one-piece suits of padded cloth armour. Eagle warriors' armour was covered with feathers (left), while the Jaguars wore spotted hide; the Jaguar captain (right) has a clan standard mounted on his back. Shields bore personal symbols in paint or mosaics of featherwork. The weapons were javelins projected by means of an atl-atl spear-thrower, and the hardwood maquahuitl sword-club edged with razor-sharp obsidian stone flakes. Formidable in inter-tribal battles, armies numbering several thousands would nevertheless find themselves almost helpless against a few hundred Spanish veterans with steel armour and weapons, and – crucially – a few dozen horses, which the Mexica had never seen before.

SWEDISH INFANTRY

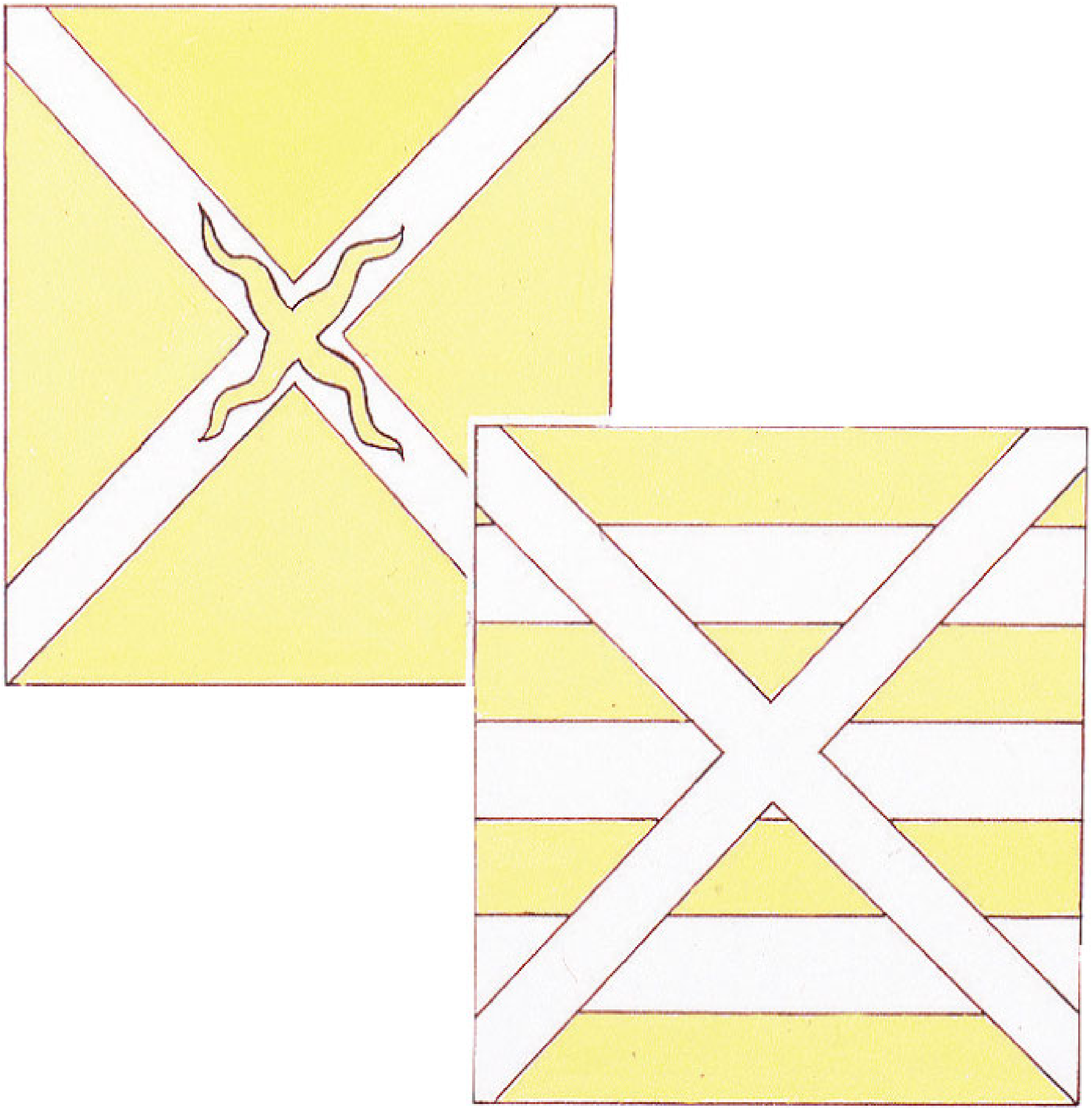
FIRST HALF 17TH CENTURY



Artwork by Richard Hook, from MAA 235: The Army of Gustavus Adolphus (1), by R Brzezinski.

Following the example of the Spanish, who were dominant during the 16th century, increasingly disciplined European armies led by Classically-educated generals developed effective mixed-arms tactics. In this age of ‘pike and shot’ warfare the cavalry, partly armoured, had a place, as did field artillery, but the main battle-line was formed of infantry regiments massed in ranks and files. These combined the blocks of half-armoured pikemen with outer ‘sleeves’ of musketeers, whose heavy matchlocks were more-or-less accurate against massed targets at 100 yards’ range. The musketeers carried measured powder charges in belts of wooden ‘cartridges’, and pouches of bullets. Their weapon was fired by pulling a trigger to drop the burning end of a piece of ‘matchcord’ into a priming pan of powder; it could produce formidable results – though in rainy weather it was, of course, useless except as a massive club.

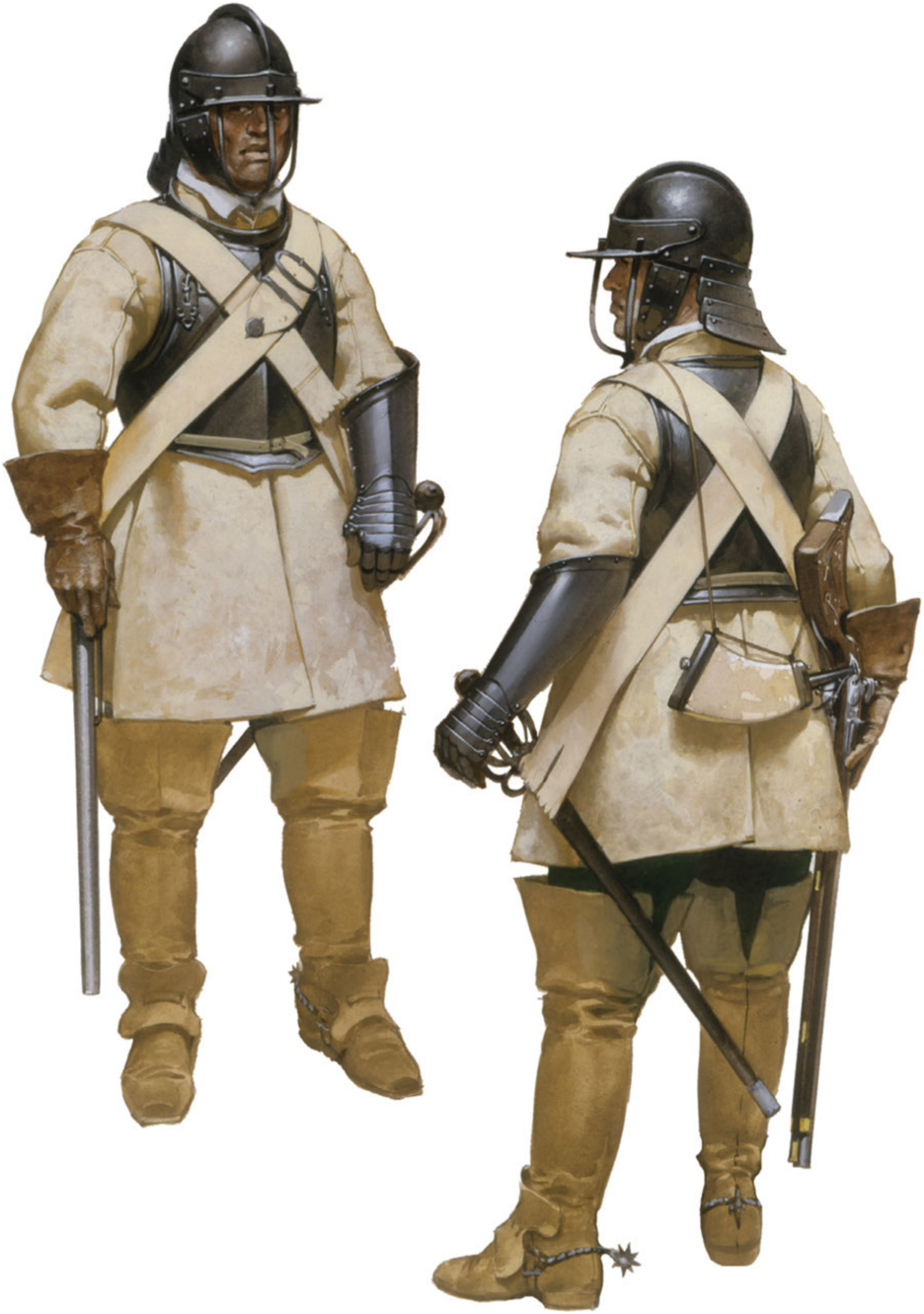
During the terribly destructive and almost Europe-wide Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) between Catholic and Protestant powers, the Swedish army of the soldier-king Gustavus Adolphus earned a high reputation. The illustration shows musketeers and pikemen of his senior mercenary unit, the Yellow Regiment, in about 1632.



Flags of the Yellow Regiment.

ENGLISH HARQUEBUSIER

MID 17TH CENTURY



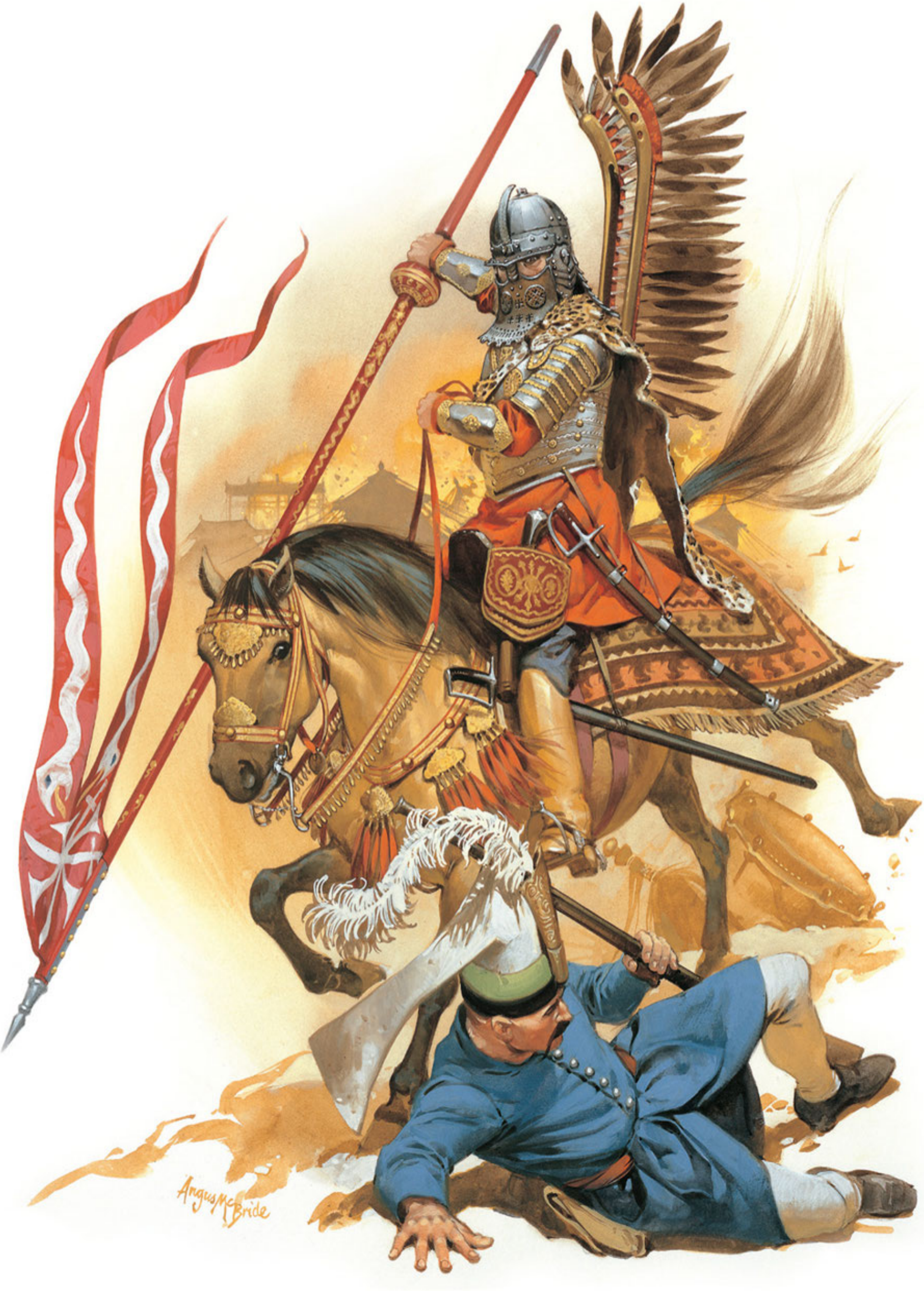
Artwork by Angus McBride, from ELI 27: Soldiers of the English Civil War (2), by John Tincey.

By the time of the English Civil Wars (1642–51) heavy musket bullets had made fully armoured ‘cuirassiers’ almost redundant, and they were replaced by a new class of medium cavalry termed harquebusiers, after the ‘harquebus’ – an old name for the carbine that they carried slung from a cross-belt. These, and the pair of pistols that they also carried in saddle-holsters, were fitted with wheellock or early flintlock mechanisms, which did away with the need for burning matchcord. Troopers could load their firearms in advance and carry them safely until they were needed, when they were fired by the trigger activating an internal spring.

However, carbines were of little use while bouncing around in the saddle, and pistols had a very short accurate range; troopers usually fired them once when closing with the enemy, and then relied upon their heavy swords in the mêlée that followed. They wore steel helmets, and cuirasses that were proof against pistol shots, over a heavy leather ‘buff coat’ (i.e. of so-called ‘buffalo hide’) thick enough to turn aside most sword-cuts. High boots protected the legs – more from thorns than from weapons – and a steel ‘bridle gauntlet’ protected from sword-cuts the left forearm and the hand which held the reins.

POLISH HUSSAR

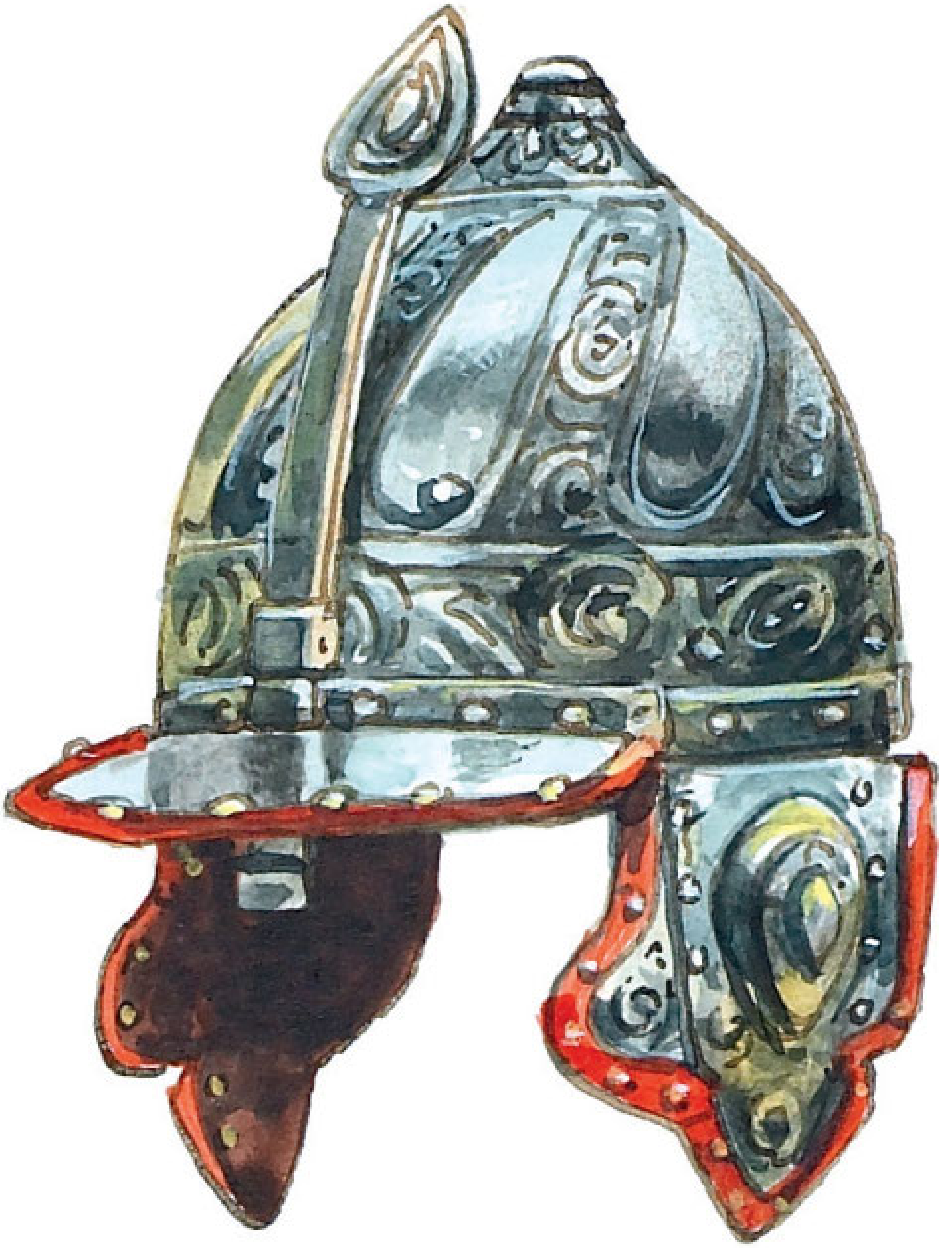
LATE 17TH CENTURY


Angus McBride

Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 184: Polish Armies 1569–1696 (1), by R Brzezinski.

In most armies the term ‘hussar’ described a light cavalryman, but, for purely local reasons, in Poland it came to mean a heavy armoured rider. Despite the enormous expense of their horses and elaborate gear, and their vulnerability to musket balls, this class of aristocratic horsemen still made up perhaps 20 per cent of the Polish cavalry in the Turkish wars of the later 17th century. They became particularly famous abroad after King John Sobieski’s army saved Vienna in 1683.

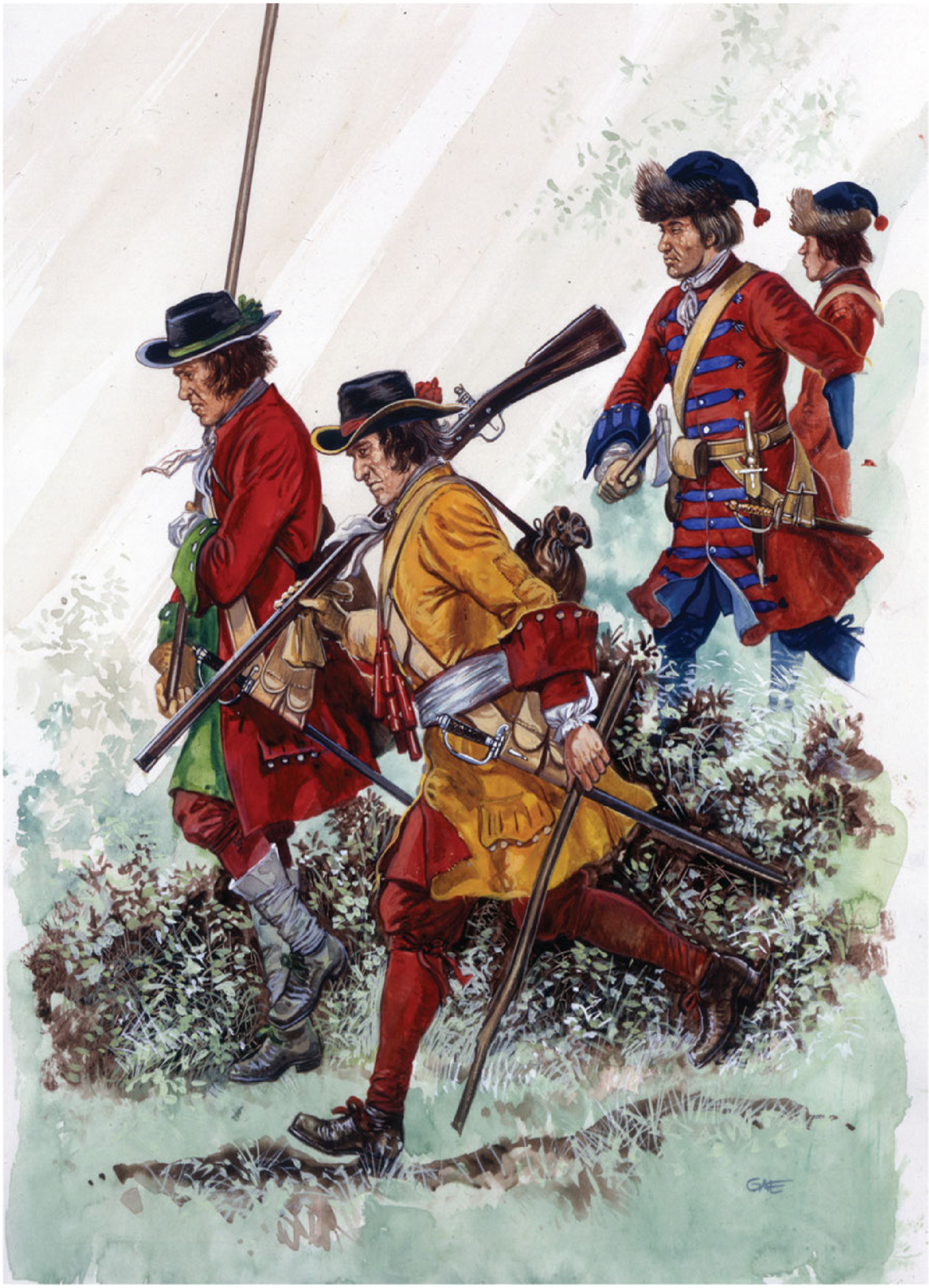
No two of these ‘comrades’ wore exactly the same, but the general style was as illustrated. The most obvious feature are the ‘wings’ of feathers mounted on a wooden frame attached to the backplate; it is plausibly suggested that these, together with the tasselled harness, flapping fur cape and long lance pennant, were intended to frighten enemy horses. This example of the Mamluk- and Hungarian-style szyszak helmet has an unusual faceguard in addition to the sliding nasal bar, but the cuirass and upper arm defences were usually of this laminated construction. As well as a pair of saddle-pistols, he is armed with two swords: at his hip, a curved hussar sabre for slashing, and on the saddle a slim, straight, Hungarian-style koncerz for thrusting. The lance pennant is copied from several identical surviving examples.



Decorated helmet with a sliding nasal, 15th to early 16th century. Artwork by Peter Dennis, from WAR 173: Mamluk 'Askari 1250–1517, by David Nicolle.

BRITISH INFANTRY

END OF 17TH CENTURY


GAE

Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 267: The British Army 1660–1704, by John Tincey.

Parliament's New Model Army of 1645 had seen the introduction in Britain of 'uniformly' coloured coats, usually (but not always) red, with coloured regimental linings visible where the long sleeves were turned up. By the 1670s examples of 'smallclothes' (waistcoat and breeches) in regimental colours had also appeared, as had an almost universal headgear – this formalized version of a felt slouch hat, with tape edging and a decorative cockade. A majority in each regiment now carried flintlock muskets, but even in 1695 each company kept 14 pikemen alongside 46 musketeers, to protect the reloading musketeers during cavalry attacks.

In the late 1670s a new 'assault' weapon was issued to one company per regiment: the hand grenade. The grenadiers (right) carried four bombs in a slung pouch, hatchets, flintlocks that could be slung on their backs, and a small belly-pouch for the cartridges. They also had upright cloth caps – more convenient when throwing – and, because their companies had no pikemen, they began to receive a 'plug' bayonet in addition to their sword. Grenadier companies soon adopted embellishments to set them apart, such as fur on the caps and tape on the buttonholes. In this, as in many details of uniform, individual regimental colonels still had much freedom.

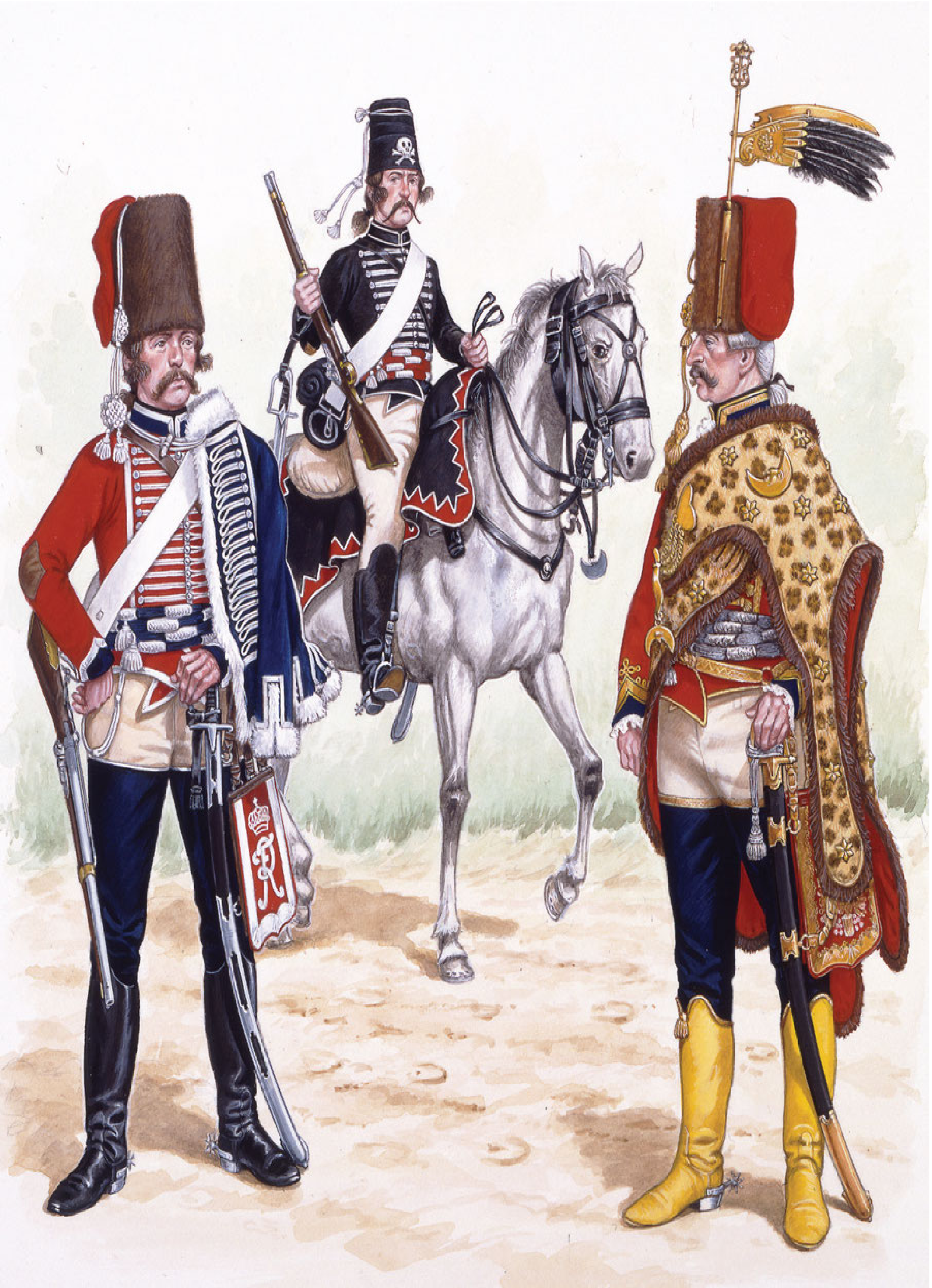
IMPERIAL WARS

1740s–1815

Artwork by Jeffrey Burn, from WAR 24: Austrian Grenadiers and Infantry 1788–1816, by David Hollins (top); and by Patrice Courcelle, from MAA 440: Napoleon’s Polish Lancers of the Imperial Guard, by Ronald Pawly (bottom).

PRUSSIAN HUSSARS

MID 18TH CENTURY

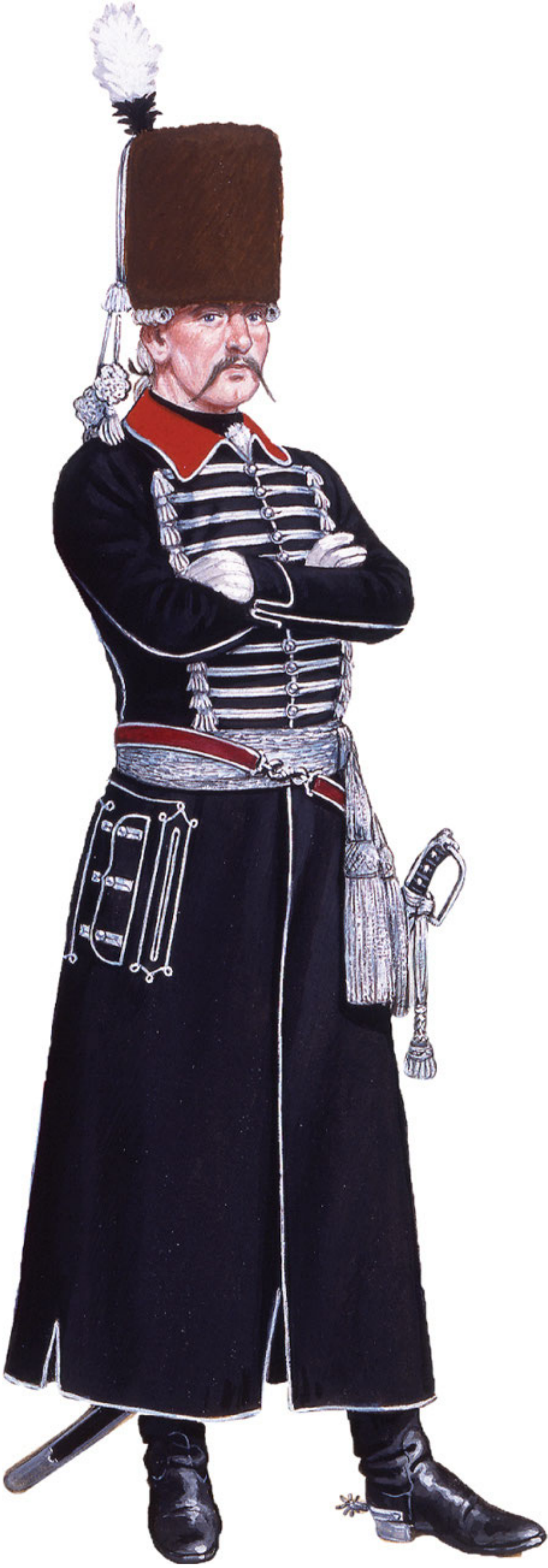


FR

Artwork by Bryan Fosten, from MAA 236: Frederick the Great's Army (1), by Philip Haythornthwaite.

While 18th-century European tactics were rigid, commanders recognized a continuing need for 'light' troops – versatile units of scouts and skirmishers, to operate on the peripheries of the 'chess-board' armies. Led with imagination and daring, these agile 'hunters', on foot or horseback, made use of the terrain and of speedy movement to gather information about the enemy, to hamper his more ponderous columns on the march, and to pursue and harass him when he retreated.

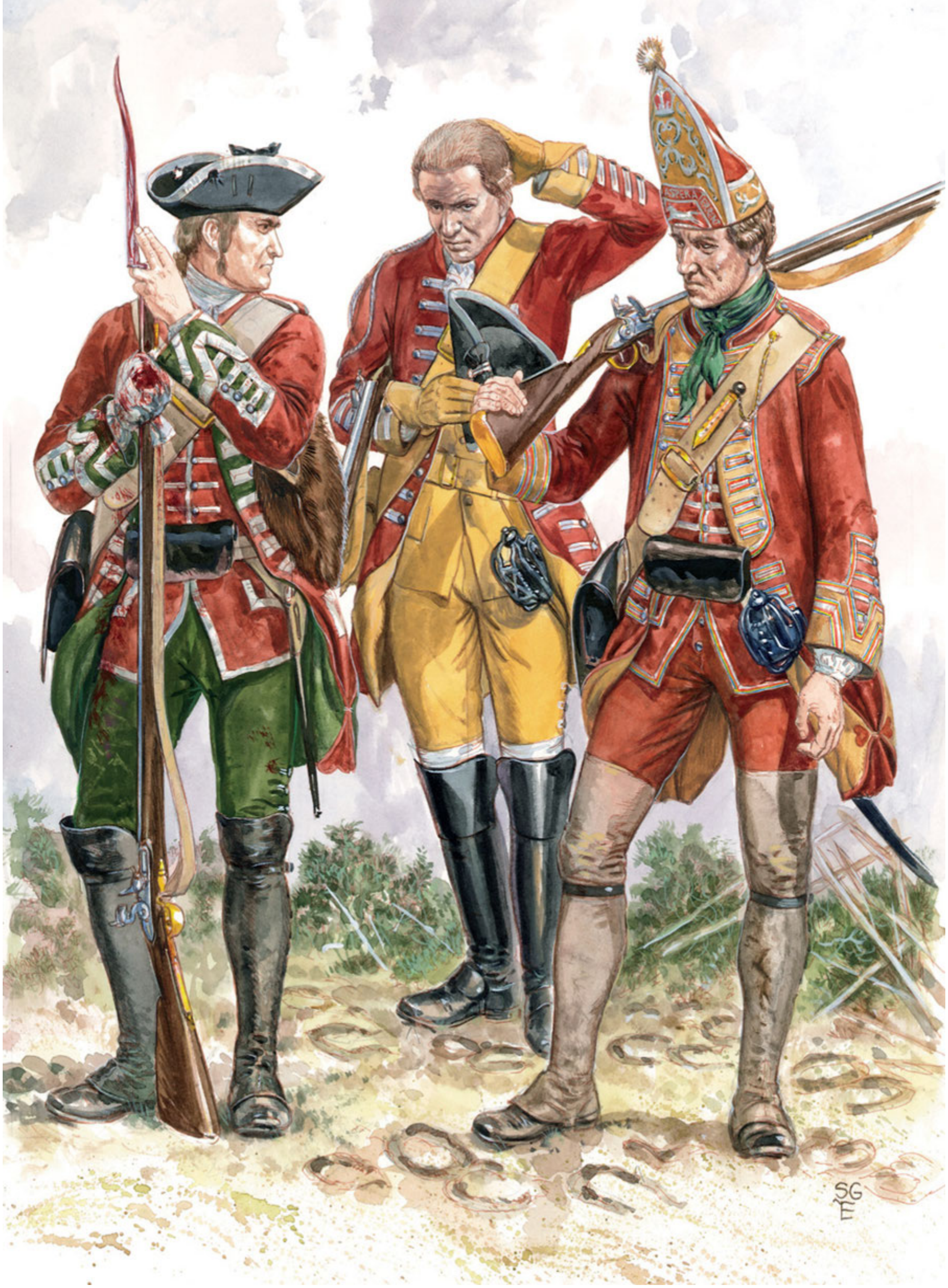
The Continental powers initially enlisted such men in the wilder borderlands of Europe, such as the Polish and Hungarian plains and the Balkan mountains. Over time, however, their ranks became filled with local officers and men attracted by their swagger and relatively unrestrained lifestyle, and the foreigners' sometimes exotic national costumes became formalized. The senior officer (right) of King Frederick the Great's Prussian hussar light cavalry in gala dress, c.1744, immediately recalls the Polish hussar here. The troopers illustrate the evolution of a traditional fleece or cloth cap into a tall kolpak busby or mirliton, of a wolfskin cape into a slung pelisse over-jacket, and of a herdsman's lassoo and spare reins carried wound around the waist into a 'barrel sash'.



Officer, Bosniaks, winter uniform, post-1762

BRITISH INFANTRY

MID 18TH CENTURY


SG
E

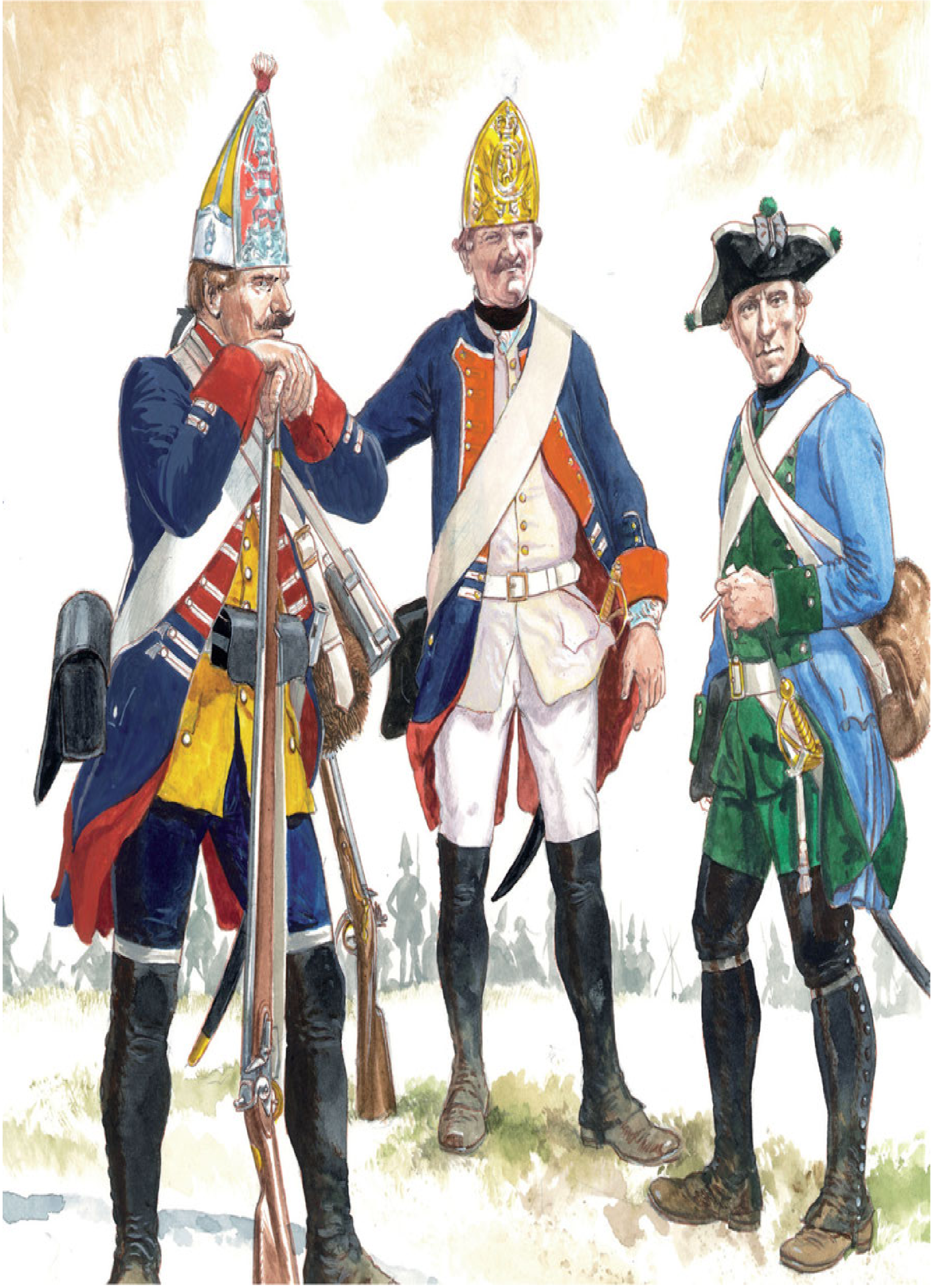
Artwork by Gerry and Sam Embleton, from MAA 460: Frederick the Great's Allies 1756–63, by Stuart Reid.

Britain's essential national interests were to keep the sea-lanes open for worldwide trade, and to prevent France from dominating the Continent. National resources were therefore devoted to building a strong navy, and to creating (and financing) alliances with Continental land powers.

These soldiers, fighting against the French as allies of Prussia in 1759, show the elaboration of uniforms during these 'Lace Wars'. Soldiers' appearance was now much influenced by their monarchs' and colonels' insistence that they present an impressive spectacle on parade, and the first centralized British dress regulations appeared in 1742. The slouch hat is now 'cocked' up on three sides. Regimental 'facing colours' show on the cuffs, buttoned-back lapels and coat-tails, and there is a lavish application of patterned 'lace' or tape on the buttonholes and edges of coats and exposed waistcoats. The grenadier company is now the elite of each regiment, and the once-simple cap is a tall, highly decorated 'mitre' (right). A ventilated brass tube on his cross-belt, to hold a smouldering match for his grenades, gives the grenadier something else to polish. Only grenadiers still had an infantry sword, or 'hanger', as a mark of status; the 'hat men' had long had a bayonet for face-to-face fighting (left). With his top-boots and heavy sword, the dragoon (centre), theoretically a mounted infantryman, now usually served as a conventional cavalry trooper.

HESSE-KASSEL INFANTRY

MID 18TH CENTURY



Artwork by Gerry and Sam Embleton, from MAA 460: Frederick the Great's Allies 1756–63, by Stuart Reid.

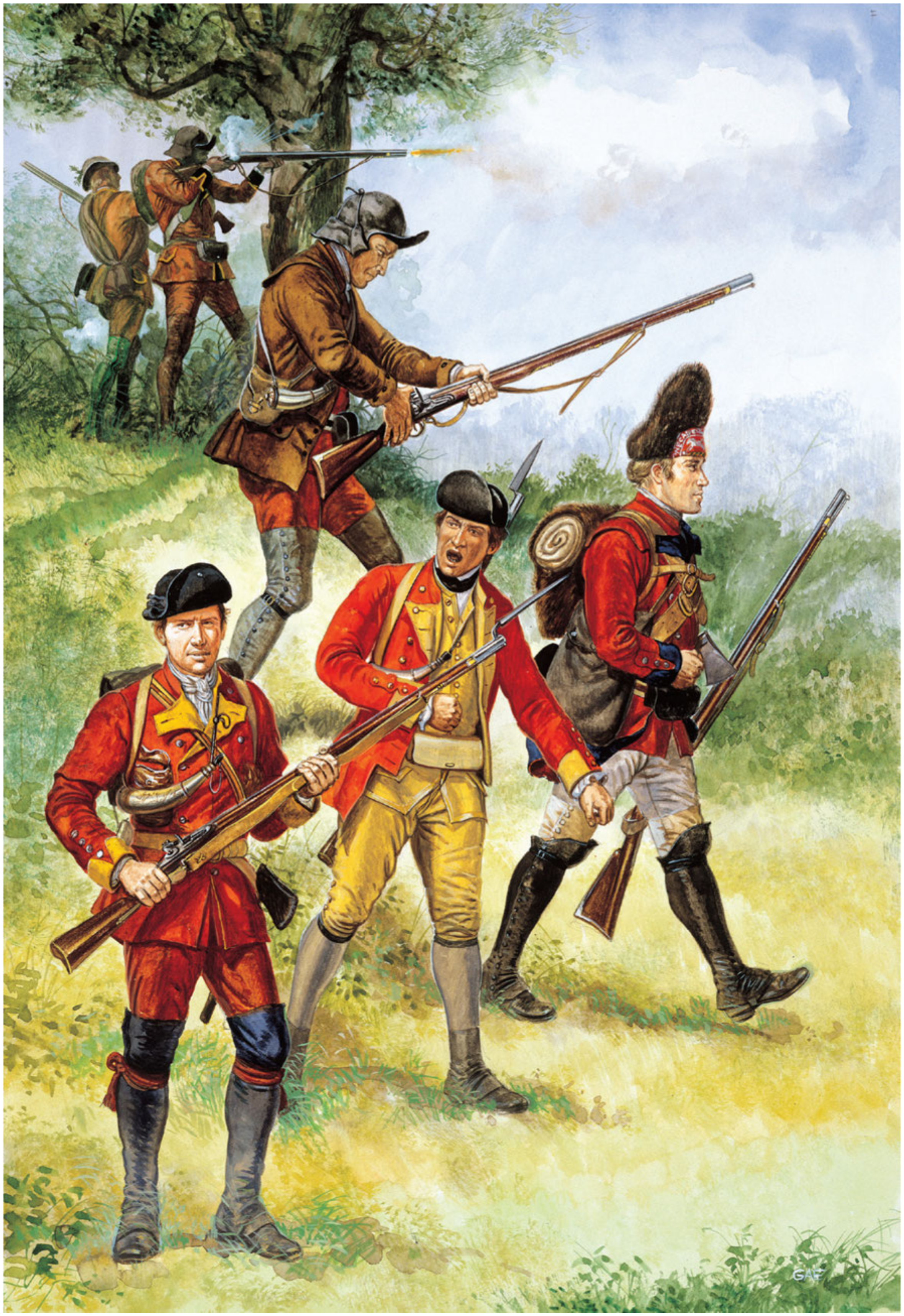
In the 18th century Germany was a galaxy of large and small kingdoms and duchies. During the Seven Years' War (1756–63) Hanover, Brunswick and Hesse were allied with Prussia and Britain, and followed the uniform fashions of both those states. Since Britain had shared a ruling dynasty with Hanover since 1714, Hanoverian soldiers wore red; Brunswick and Hesse modelled their armies on that of Prussia, the most militarily impressive German state throughout this century.

Prussian infantry regiments were divided into five companies of musketeers and one of elite grenadiers (in theory, the bravest and hardiest men). Additionally, Frederick the Great formed new regiments of 'fusiliers' – ordinary line infantry, but physically smaller men. The Hessian grenadier and fusilier (left and centre) have a very Prussian appearance: dark blue coats faced with red, with extra white lace for the grenadier, and 'mitre' caps with tin or brass front plates decorated with heraldic motifs. Soldiers had to grow moustaches; their hair was curled at the side and drawn back into a ribbon-tied queue, and powdered with flour when on formal duties. The green facings and smallclothes of the 'hunter' (right), from a wartime-raised 'free regiment', follow the German Jäger tradition.

Infantrymen of all armies by now wore tall cloth gaiters, buttoned and gartered in place, with 'spats' fastened under their shoes. These protected the legs on the march, and kept the shoes from being sucked off by mud.

BRITISH LIGHT INFANTRY, AMERICA

MID 18TH CENTURY



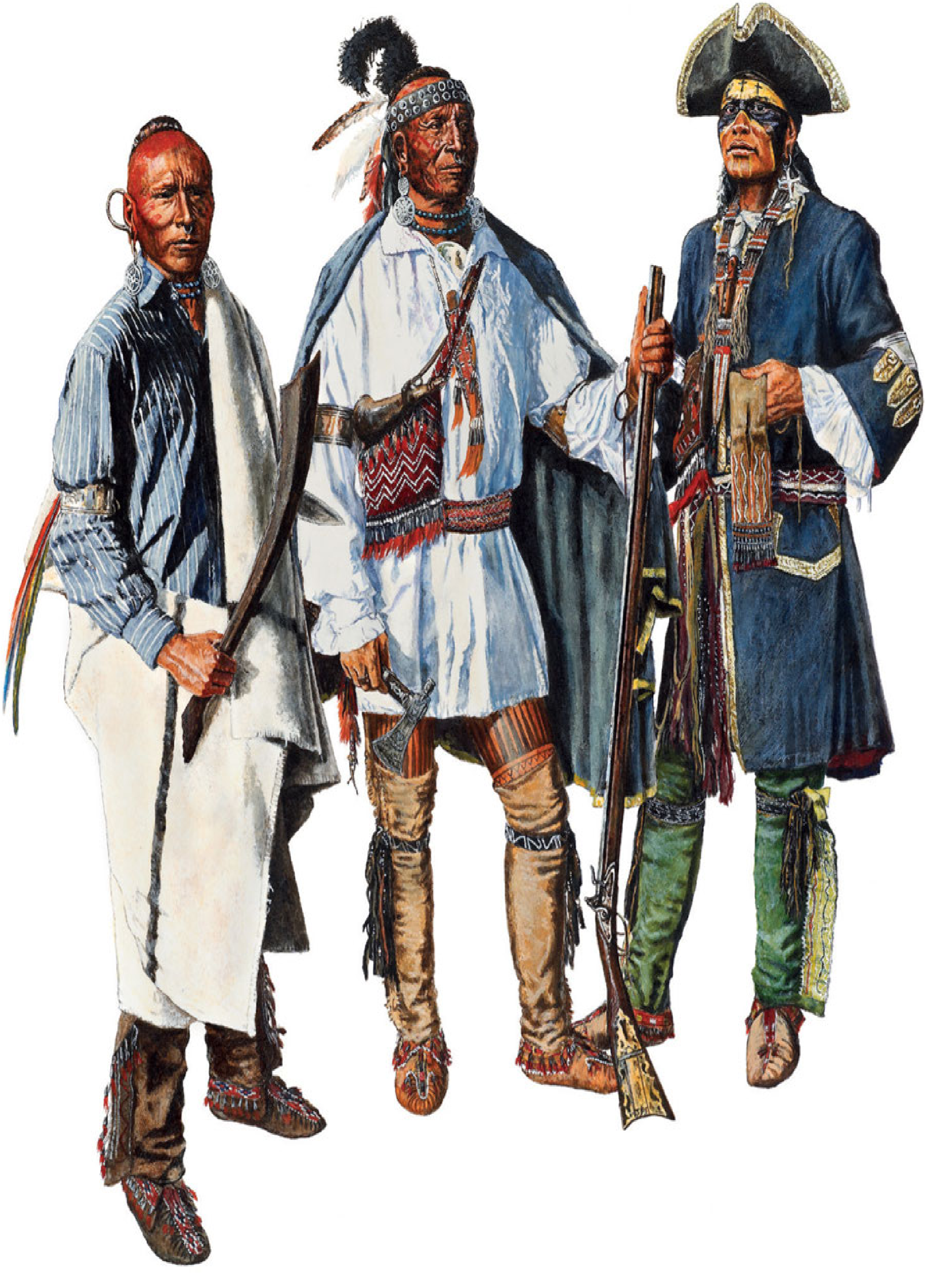
Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 48: Wolfe’s Army, by Robin May and Gerry Embleton.

The Seven Years’ War was also pursued far from Europe, in the British and French colonies in North America. During what Americans call the ‘French-Indian War’, the formally trained British officers and troops found themselves in vast, trackless forests, facing the guerrilla tactics of French-Canadian backwoodsmen leading local Indians more often than textbook French battle-lines. After some shocking lessons they learned how to adapt, largely from the example of locally-recruited ‘rangers’ experienced in forest fighting. Many redcoats were taught a new and self-sufficient way of ‘light infantry’ soldiering, which by 1759 was reflected in both their successes and their appearance.

In striking contrast to their near-contemporaries here, their hair was cropped and their cocked hats cut down into ‘jockey caps’. Coats were either stripped of lace and cut short into jackets, or replaced by sleeved waistcoats (left). Their unwieldy cartridge boxes were replaced by ‘belly boxes’, or by powder horns and sewn-on leather pockets for musket flints and balls. Swords were replaced with tomahawks, and even grenadiers rearranged their kit to be more practical (right). Officers (centre) carried light ‘fusil’ muskets – and learned to do without their soldier-servants when in the field.

GREAT LAKES INDIAN TRIBES

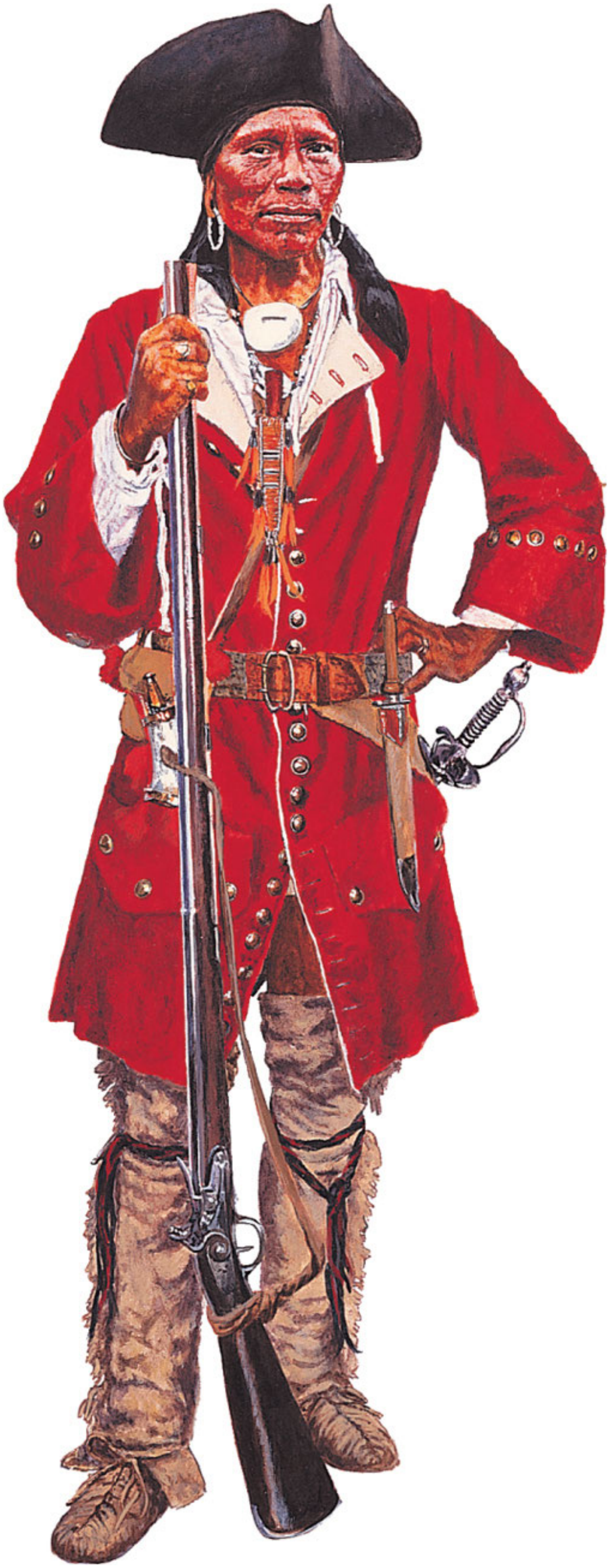
LATE 18TH CENTURY



Artwork by Jonathan Smith, from MAA 467: North American Indian Tribes of the Great Lakes, by Michael G Johnson.

During the French-Indian War both British and French colonists and some of the officers shipped out from Europe had extensive contacts with the Native American tribes, whose warriors fought on both sides. ‘Provincial’ backwoodsmen and Europeans alike adopted practical local items like buckskin leggings and mocassins, and some white officers even had their portraits painted in Indian dress.

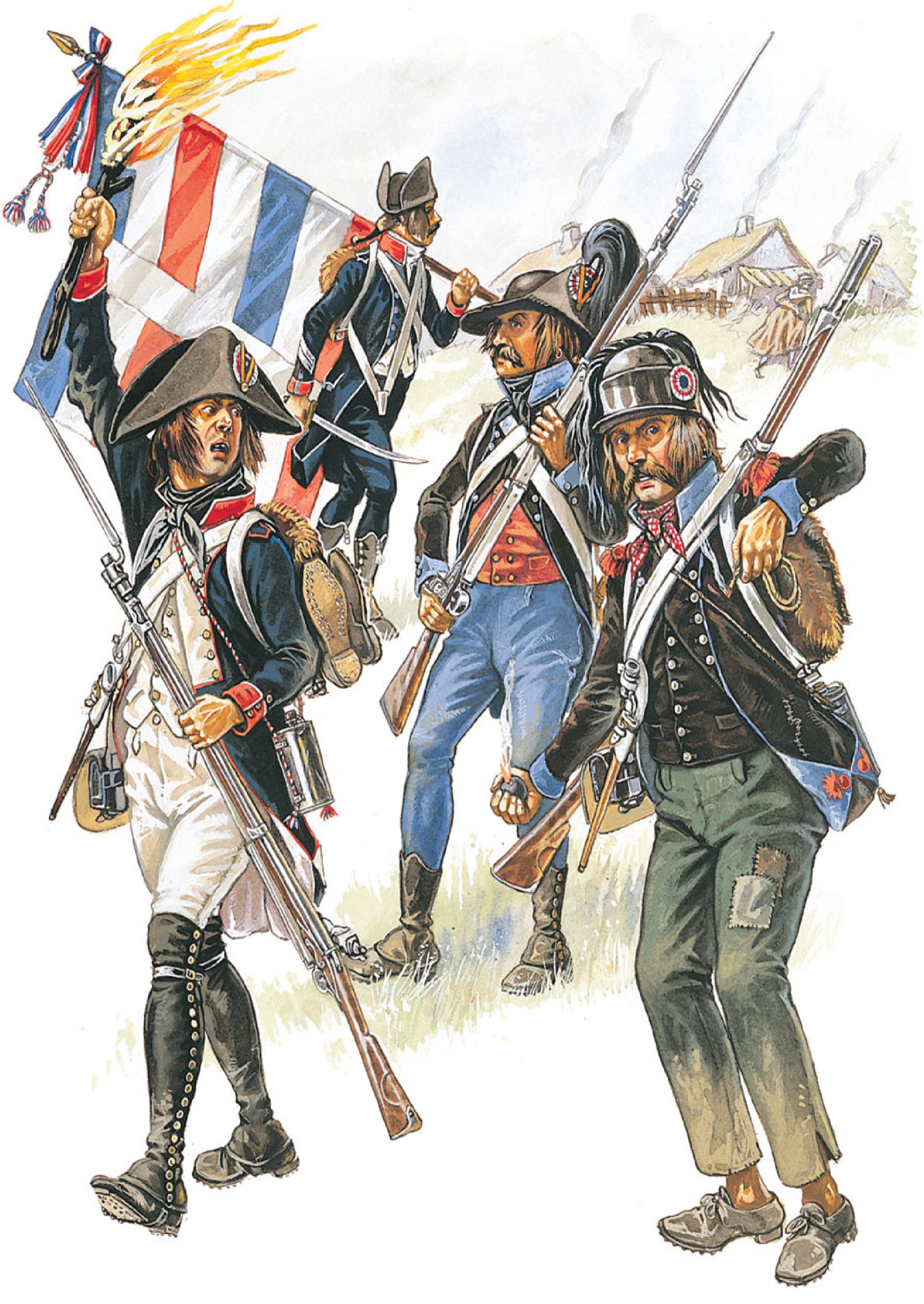
Equally, the Indians almost universally adopted European items, both practical and decorative, that they could not make for themselves, as illustrated by these warriors of the Shawnee, the Kaskaskia, and the anti-British confederacy led in 1763–66 by the Ottawa chief Pontiac. The most obvious are flintlock muskets, but white traders also supplied many iron tomahawks. The most widely sought-after trade materials were woven cloth or ready-made shirts, and woollen blankets. In conjunction with their intricate quillwork decoration of leggings, mocassins, pouches and sheaths, warriors favoured silver ear-drops, armbands and other ornaments, as well as traded ostrich feathers (left and centre). The combination (right) of a French military cocked hat and coat with traditional face-painting is particularly striking.



Abenaki warrior, 1689. Artwork by Jonathan Smith, from MAA 428: Indian Tribes of the New England Frontier, by Michael G Johnson.

FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY INFANTRY

END OF 18TH CENTURY



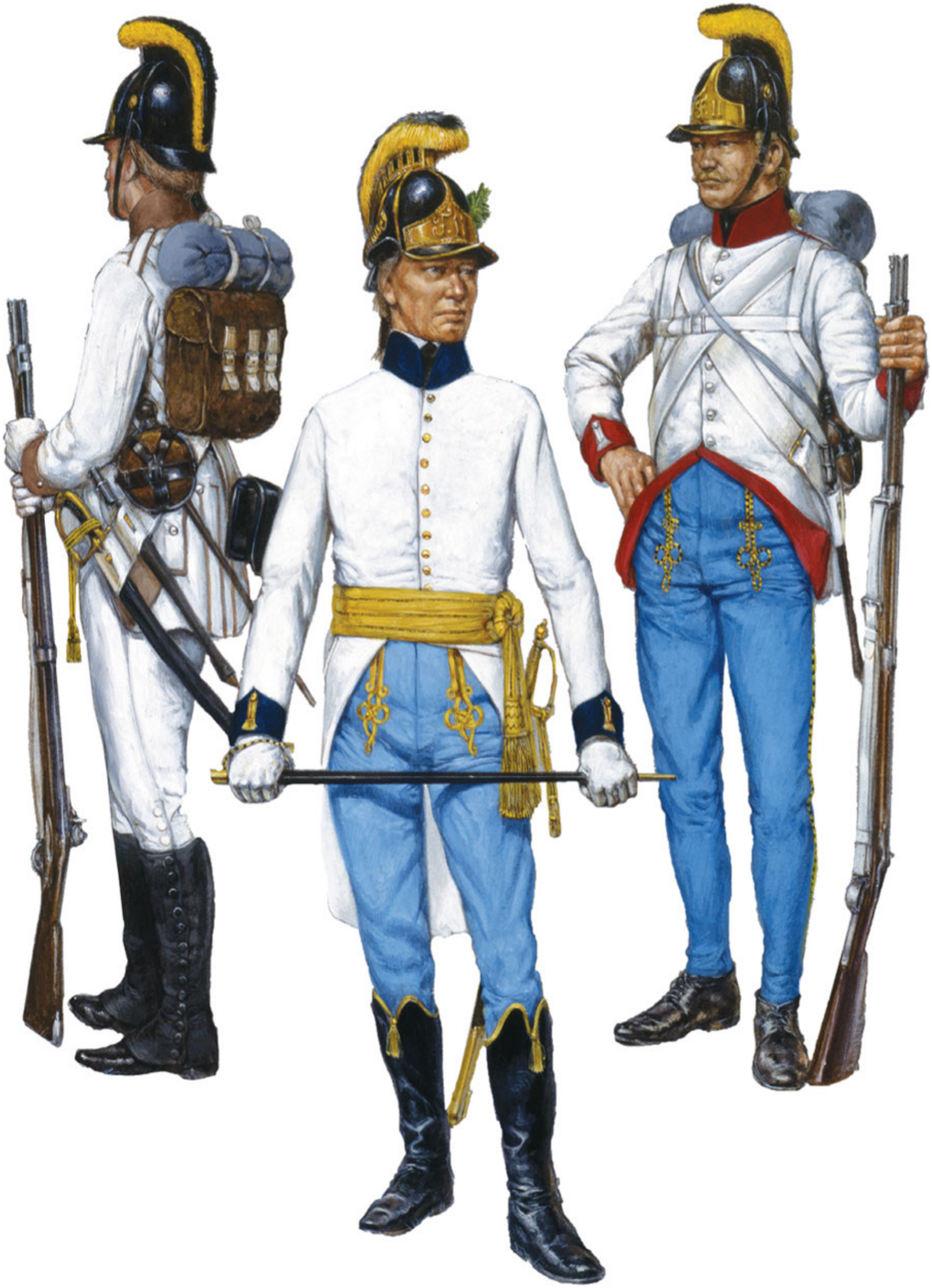
Artwork by Patrice Courcelle, from MAA 403: French Revolutionary Infantry 1789–1802, by Terry Crowdy.

The discredited Bourbon monarchy was swept away by the cataclysmic French Revolution in 1789, and a new republican army had to be created in the early 1790s – both to complete the victory of the revolutionaries, and to face the new regime's many foreign enemies. At first patriotic but barely trained volunteers flocked to fight beside the remaining veterans, with surprising success; but in 1793 casualties and widespread desertion obliged the government to introduce conscription. Over the following 20 years the Napoleonic Wars would be fought (except by Britain) between armies of conscripts, whose ranks were often filled out with 'turned' prisoners and various other dubious recruits.

The Revolutionary army's uniforms varied according to availability and funds. The pre-Revolution National Guard dress of dark blue, faced with red and lined with white (left), was more politically acceptable than the old Bourbon white coat, but providing the many thousand uniforms needed was problematic. 'Fringe' corps, such as the 'Free Legion' raised from ex-military convicts for the abortive landing in Wales in 1797 (right), received odd combinations. This is a captured British coat cut down, dyed brown, and given pale blue trim, and a peaked leather casque with a hair crest, as first supplied to some French infantry in 1791.

AUSTRIAN INFANTRY

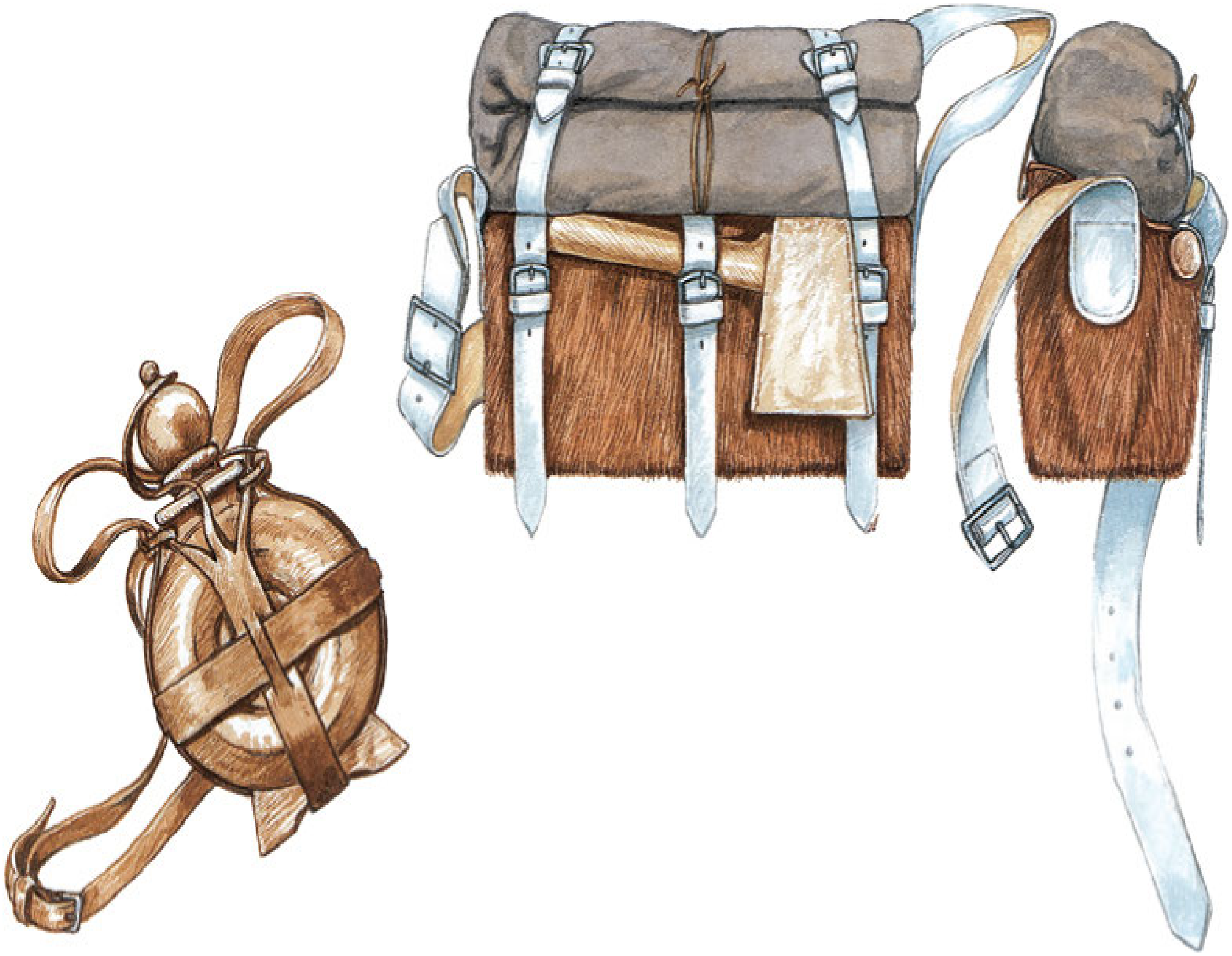
END OF 18TH CENTURY



Artwork by Richard Hook, from MAA 257: Napoleon's Campaigns in Italy, by Philip Haythornthwaite.

The most relentless and long-suffering of France's Continental enemies during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was the Emperor Francis II of Austria-Hungary. Austrian armies fought the French or their allies in almost every campaign from 1792 to 1815. Apart from the core of German-Austrian and Hungarian conscripts, recruits from all over the former Holy Roman Empire and beyond would fill the multi-national ranks.

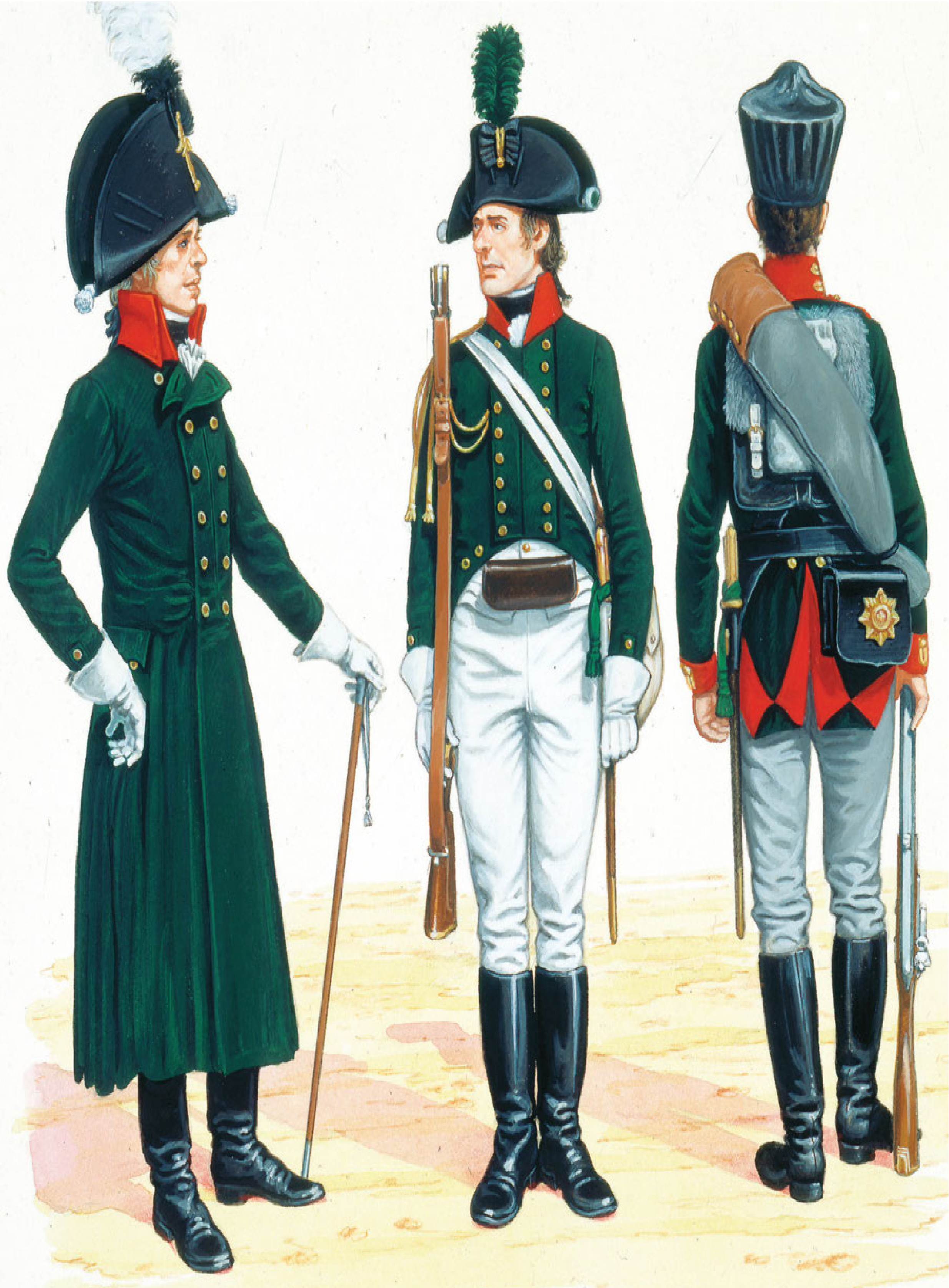
The traditional coat colour was white (despite its making wounds horribly noticeable). 'German' regiments (left) had straight cuffs and wore white trousers, while Hungarians (centre and right) were distinguished by pointed cuffs and tight, light blue trousers with yellow-and-black decorative 'knots' on the thighs. This is the 1798 regulation uniform, with a brass-bound, combed leather helmet with a yellow-and-black woollen crest; it was phased out in 1806–10 mainly on grounds of expense, and replaced with a felt shako. In field dress, officers (centre) of most armies were distinguished by – if nothing else – a sash, usually of costly silver or gold bullion thread with interwoven coloured lines. Austria isssued more campaigning kit than most armies: every second man carried either a hatchet on his pack, or a round wooden water-bottle (left).



Austrian backpack and and wooden water-bottle. Artwork by Jeffrey Burn, from WAR 24: Austrian Grenadiers and Infantry 1788–1816, by David Hollins.

PRUSSIAN JÄGERS

NAPOLEONIC WARS



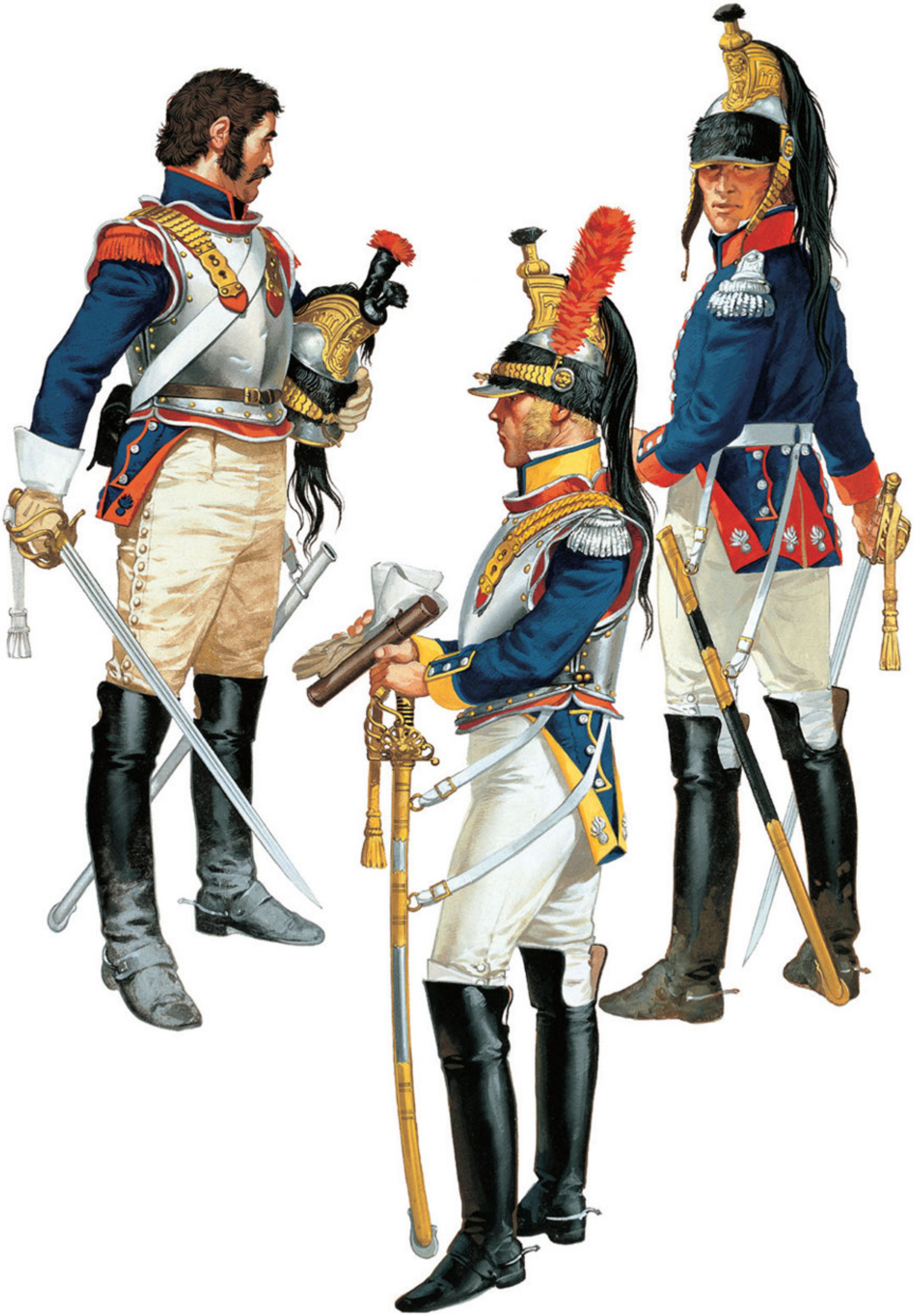
Artwork by Bryan Fosten, from MAA 149: Prussian Light Infantry 1792–1815, by Peter Hofschröer.

During these campaigns the mass of conscript infantry, drawn up rigidly in blocks or lines, were usually preceded into battle by skirmishers operating well forward in ‘loose’ order. A minority of these were from units recruited among experienced foresters and armed with rifled weapons, with an accurate range two or three times the 100-odd yards of the standard smoothbore musket. In German armies such picked units were termed ‘shooters’ or ‘hunters’ (Jägers), and they retained the traditional green uniforms of such troops.

Prussia suffered a catastrophic defeat in 1806, and endured humiliating French-imposed peace terms until Napoleon’s disaster in Russia in 1812 prompted a national rising in 1813. By then Prussian organization, tactical training and uniforms had all been modernized. The greatcoated officer (left) of 1806 has an 18th-century look, and his private (centre) also wears a big, awkward cocked hat. The Guard Jäger of 1813 (right) has a handier felt shako, here with a rainproof oilcoth cover, and a buttoned leather sleeve keeps his rolled greatcoat neat. The brass star badge on his pouch is a Guard distinction, like the gold-lace bars barely visible on his collar and cuffs. The short rifles varied, since many were not centrally issued but brought along by volunteers or donated to the army.

FRENCH CUIRASSIERS

NAPOLEONIC WARS



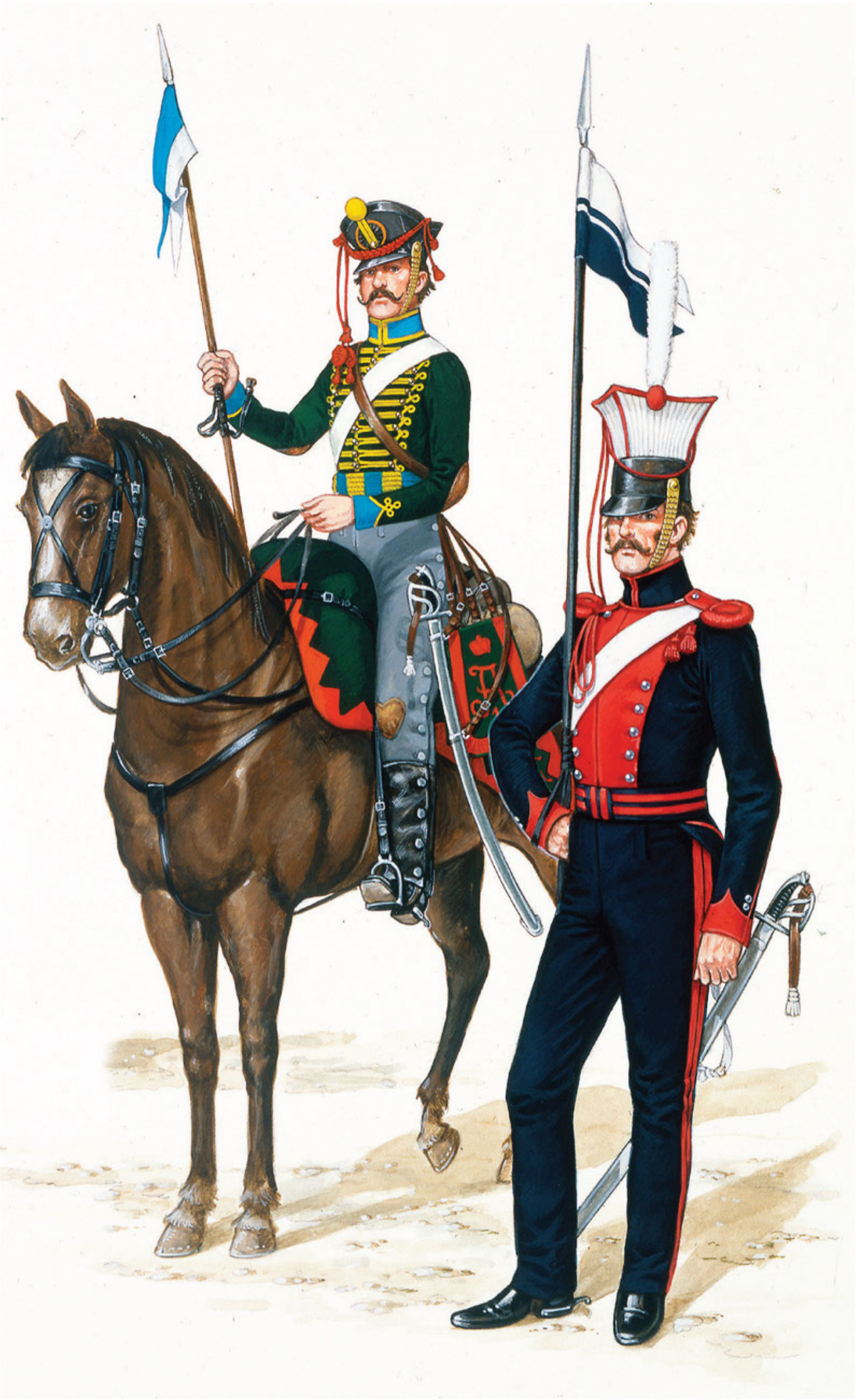
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 64: Napoleon's Cuirassiers and Carabiniers, by Emir Bukhari.

After Napoleon Bonaparte took power in France as First Consul in 1802, continuing as Emperor from 1805, he reformed the army's neglected cavalry arm. He organized it into light hussars and chasseurs ('hunters') for reconnaissance and outpost work; all-purpose dragoons; and heavy regiments of his operational reserve – the cuirassiers, wearing half-armour that protected them against swords, though not musket balls. These big men on big horses, armed with a heavy sword, a pair of pistols, and (from 1812) a carbine, provided the decisive shock on many battlefields.

This trooper of the 5th Regiment (left) displays the generic uniform of the cuirassiers in 1807–09. The iron helmet has a brass crest with a horsehair tuft and mane, a standing feather plume, a black fur 'turban', and a brass-scaled chinstrap to give some protection against cuts to the face. The short blue coatee has red fringed epaulettes and regimentally-coloured distinctions; the cuirass has a red lining to protect the uniform from chafing, and brass-scaled shoulder straps. For campaign, heavy cloth overalls buttoned over the white deer-hide breeches are tucked into top-boots. The officers of the 10th and 4th Regiments (centre and right) wear essentially the same but of finer quality, with silver bullion epaulettes and gilted sword fittings.

RUSSIAN LANCERS

NAPOLEONIC WARS



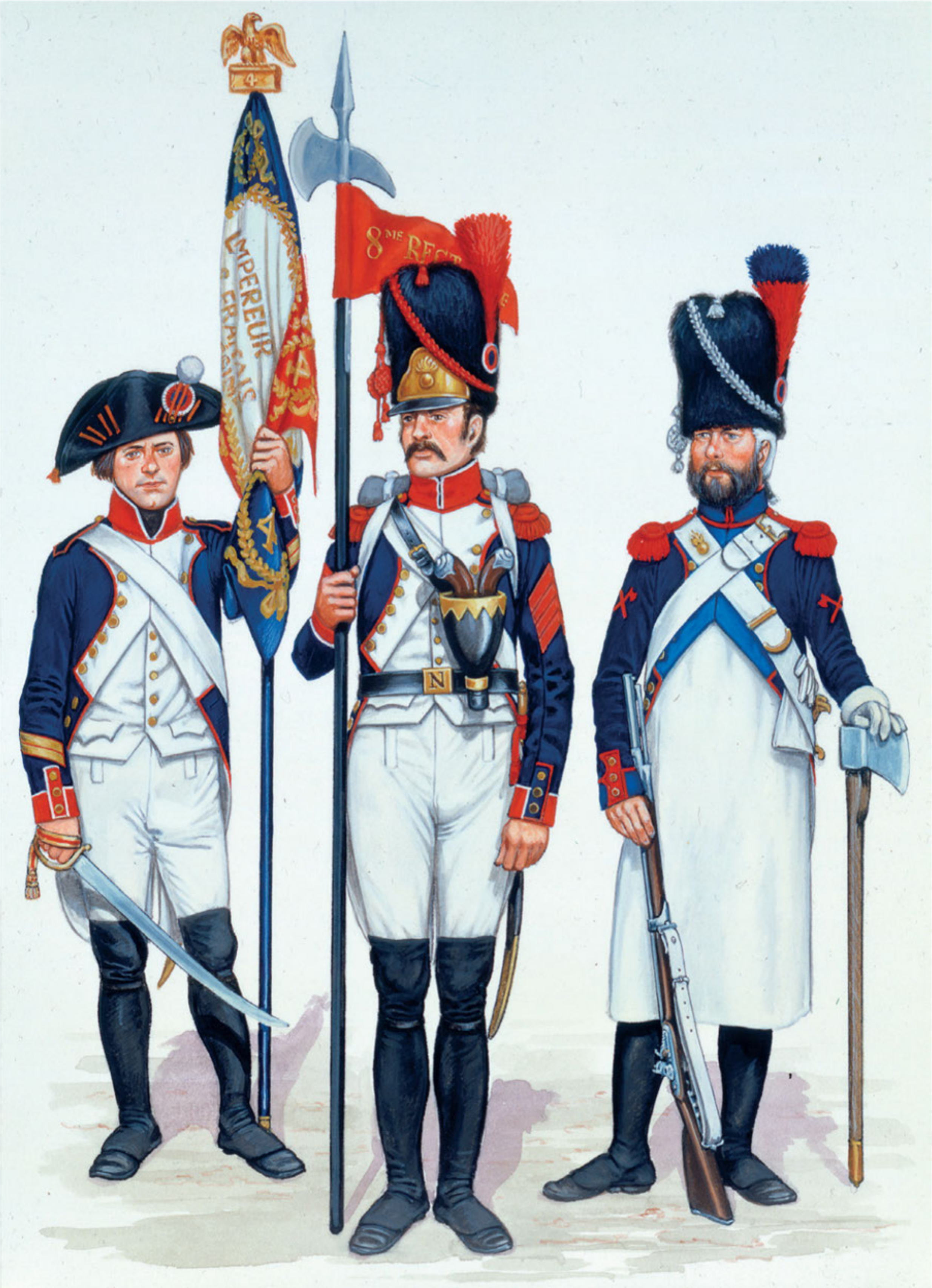
Artwork by Bryan Fosten, from MAA 189: The Russian Army of the Napoleonic Wars (2), by Philip Haythornthwaite.

The Russian and Austrian armies fielded some light cavalry armed with lances. Most of these Uhlans originated in Polish and Lithuanian units absorbed into those armies, but the Russians also employed the Cossacks, who had traditionally carried this weapon. From 1803 they converted several light-horse regiments into lancers, and this Lithuanian Uhlan (right) displays the traditional Polish four-cornered czapka cap and short, plastron-fronted kurtka jacket. In 1812 lances were also issued to the front ranks of Russian hussar units, such as the Pavlograd Hussars (left); these troopers broke gaps into enemy formations for the sabre-armed troopers following in the second rank.

Impressed by the performance of Polish lancers in his service, in 1811 Napoleon ordered the conversion of six French dragoon regiments. However, it took a long time to train a man not raised to its use from childhood to handle a lance properly. It gave useful extra reach against infantry in defensive formation, and lancers could massacre foot-soldiers if they caught units drawn up in line – as the Vistula Lancers notoriously did at Albuera in May 1811. However, if conventionally armed enemy cavalry troopers could get inside the lancers’ reach, their sabres were much more dangerous than the lancers’ unwieldy poles.

FRENCH ‘HEAD OF COLUMN’

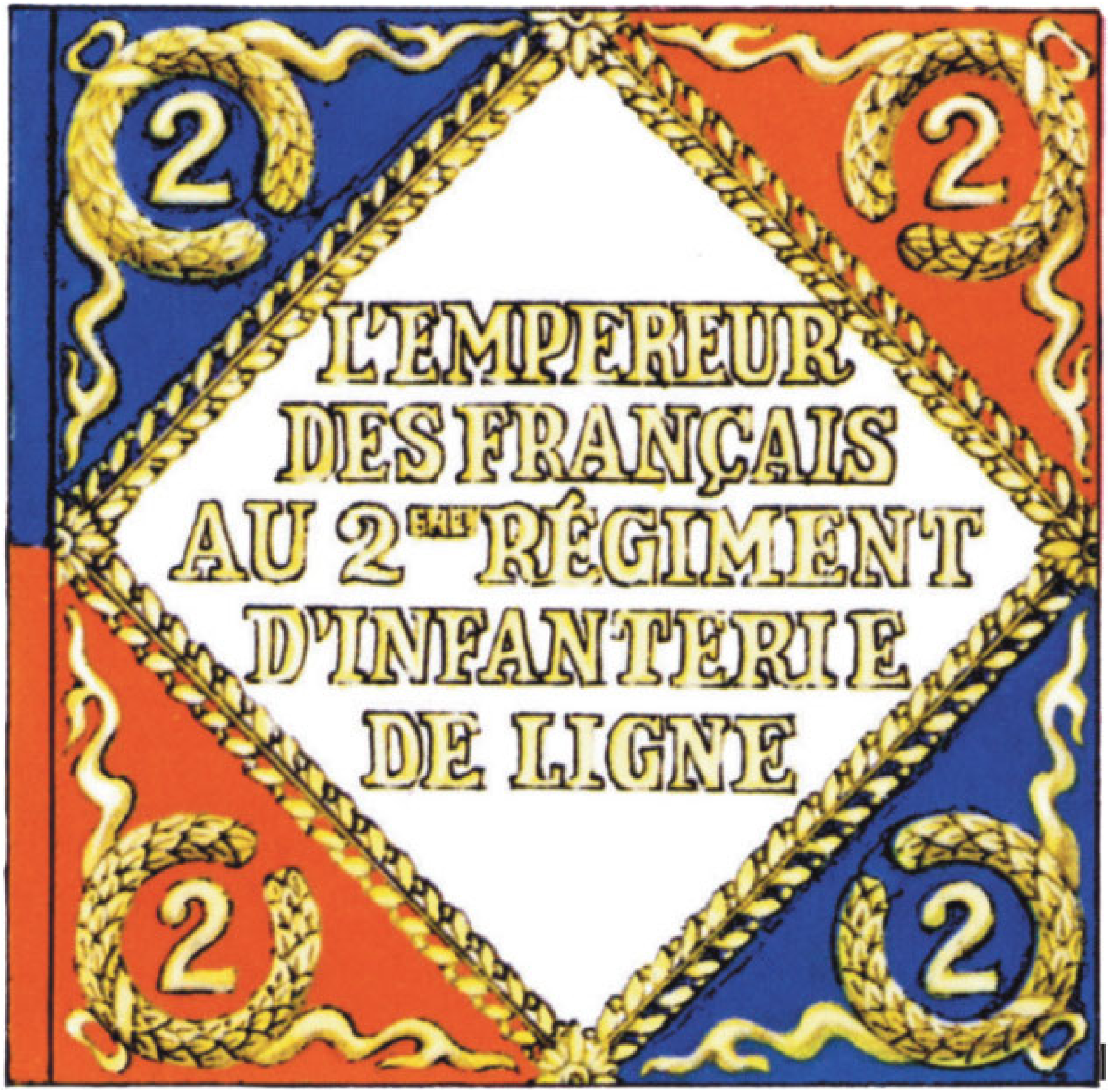
NAPOLEONIC WARS


4
L'EMPEREUR
FRANÇAIS
8ME REG
N

Artwork by Bryan Fosten, from MAA 141: Napoleon's Line Infantry, by Philip Haythornthwaite.

Of about 1.6 million young Frenchmen conscripted by Napoleon between 1800 and 1815, not all joined up unwillingly – there was genuine national pride in the new France, and a patriotic will to protect the real freedoms brought by the Revolution. Nevertheless, the pay was low (and most of it was deducted for uniform and equipment), and conditions on campaign were harsh. But Napoleon understood motivation, and built the esprit-de-corps of his regiments by means of inspiring symbolism.

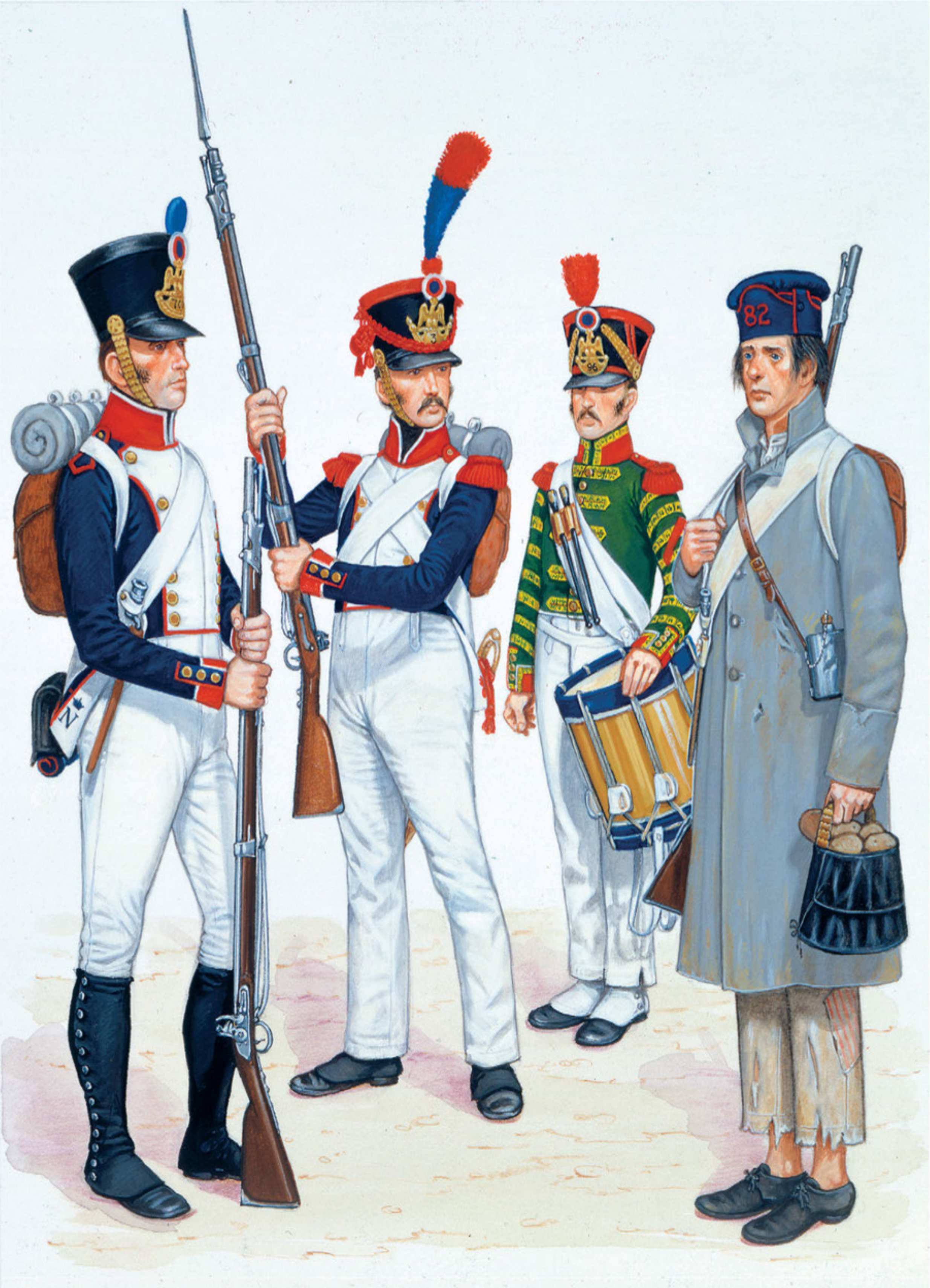
The main focus of loyalty was the Eagle standard presented by the emperor, which was modelled on the legionary standard of ancient Rome, with a tricoleur banner bearing the regiment's major battle-honours. It was carried by a veteran senior NCO or junior officer (left). This port-aigle was protected in battle (or, if he fell, replaced) by a guard of other senior NCOs, armed with halberds and pistols (centre). The other members of the regimental tête de colonne were the unit's musicians, and a squad of strong, bearded sapeurs with axes, saws and leather aprons (right) – in today's terms, combat engineers. This whole 'head of column' wore specially embellished versions of the national uniform, often with tall bearskin grenadier caps.


2
2
L'EMPEREUR
DES FRANÇAIS
AU 2ème RÉGIMENT
D'INFANTERIE
DE LIGNE
2
2

France: 1804 pattern banner of regimental 'Eagle' standard. Artwork by Guido Rosignoli, from MAA 77: Flags of the Napoleonic Wars (1), by Terence Wise.

FRENCH INFANTRY

LATE NAPOLEONIC WARS


96
82

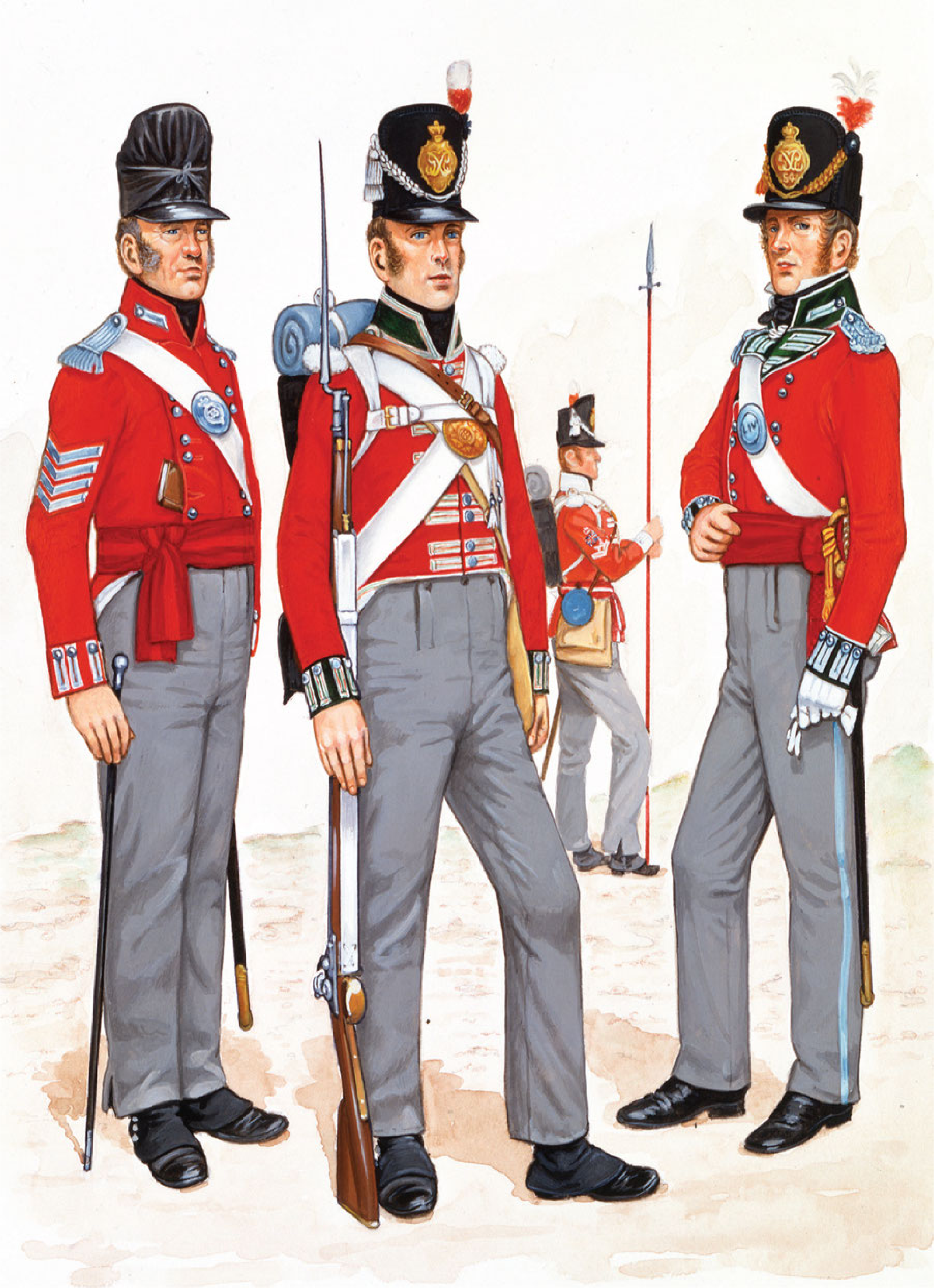
Artwork by Bryan Fosten, from MAA 141: Napoleon's Line Infantry, by Philip Haythornthwaite.

French uniforms were rationalized during the Empire. From 1806 a felt-and-leather shako replaced the old cocked hat, and the 1812 regulations prescribed new, shorter 'coatees' (left). Each regiment had four field battalions; each battalion had four companies of fusiliers (ordinary musketeers), one of grenadiers (the picked assault troops), and one of agile voltigeurs (light infantry). These two compagnies d'elite wore uniform distinctions, in red for grenadiers and green-and-yellow for voltigeurs, and for parades cords and plumes were added to the shako (centre). Each company had two drummers to pass the officers' orders in battle, distinguished by a green uniform barred with yellow 'Imperial' lace.

However, varying procurement of materials, dispersed local manufacture, and the preferences of regimental councils produced variations from regulation patterns at the best of times. During long campaigns uniforms became worn-out, filthy and patched, and usually were only replaced once a year. Shakos were covered, and loose trousers and greatcoats in varying colours were worn over uniforms – or even instead of them. During the final campaigns of 1813–15 newly conscripted boys often received only forage caps, coats and – if they were lucky – shoes (right).

BRITISH INFANTRY

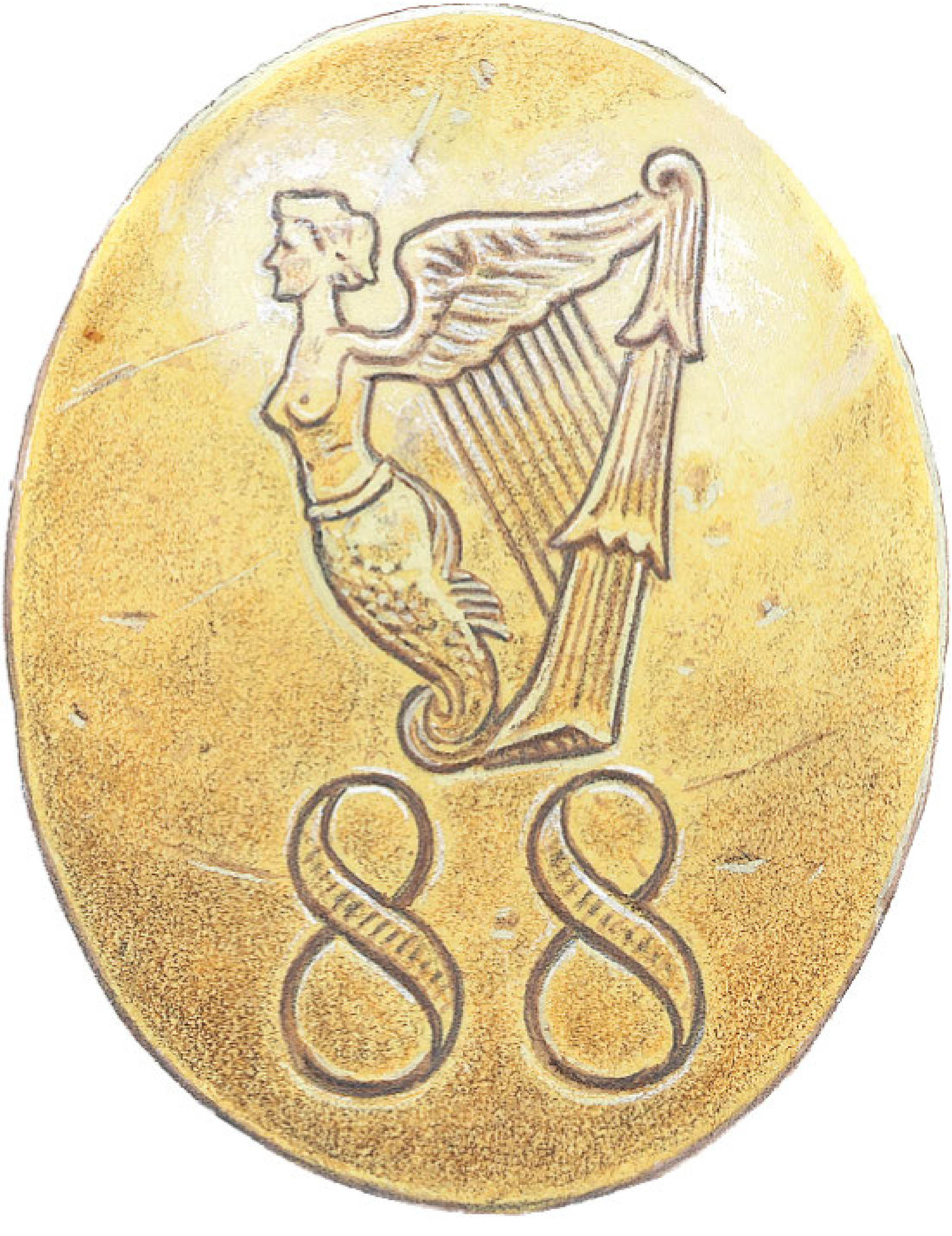
LATE NAPOLEONIC WARS


54

Artwork by Bryan Fosten, from MAA 114: Wellington’s Infantry (1).

While Britain did conscript men for the all-important Royal Navy, the relatively small British Army remained an all-volunteer service. From unimpressive beginnings, tight discipline, increasingly good leadership, and long campaign experience – particularly in the ‘Peninsula’ (Portugal and Spain) during 1808–14 – brought it to a peak of excellence. The Duke of Wellington never lost a pitched battle with what he called his ‘perfect machine’.

Unit organization was roughly similar to the French, though battalions had eight ‘centre’ and two ‘flank’ companies, and regiments rarely more than two field battalions. British uniforms, too, were modernized periodically. The long-tailed coat was replaced by a coatee jacket from 1797, and the cocked hat by a shako – of leather (1800), later felt (1806, and 1812). The numbered ‘regiments of foot’ were associated with particular counties for recruitment purposes (though the rankers actually had very diverse origins). Units were still distinguished by facing colours at collar and cuff, particular patterns of lace trim, and some traditional ‘tribal’ peculiarities. From left to right, these figures illustrate a sergeant-major of the 33rd Foot, a private of the 69th, a colour-sergeant (background), and a junior officer of the 54th, in uniforms of the 1815 Waterloo campaign, with the loose grey overall trousers worn in the field.



Shoulder belt plate of the rank-and-file of the Connaught Rangers. Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 382: Wellington’s Peninsula Regiments (1).

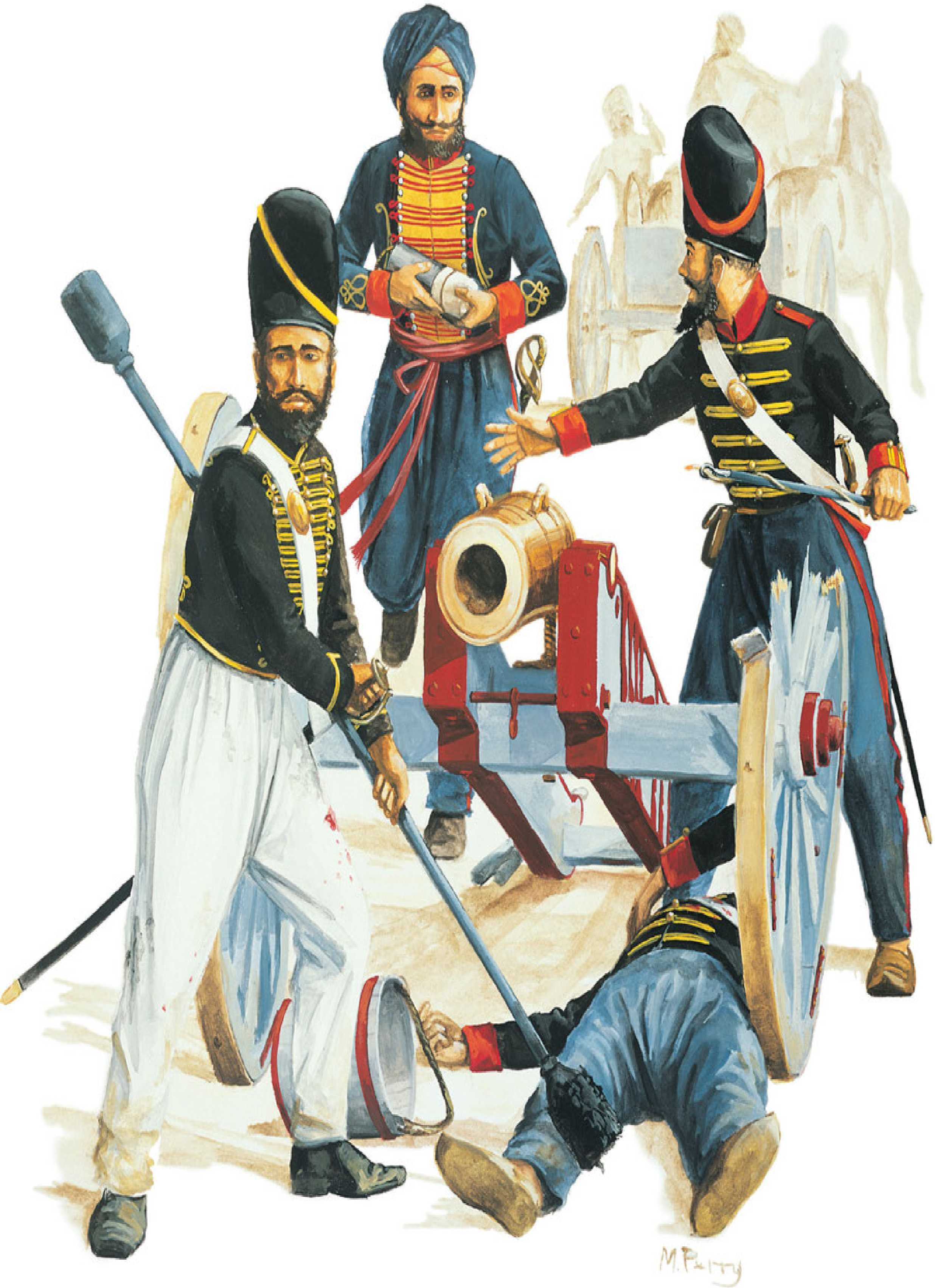
19TH CENTURY WARS

*c.*1825–1900

Artwork by Giuseppe Rava, from MAA 499: Armies of the War of the Triple Alliance 1864–70, by Gabriele Esposito (top); and by Richard Hook, from MAA 163: The American Plains Indians, by Jason Hook (bottom).

SIKH ARTILLERY

1825–46


M.Perry

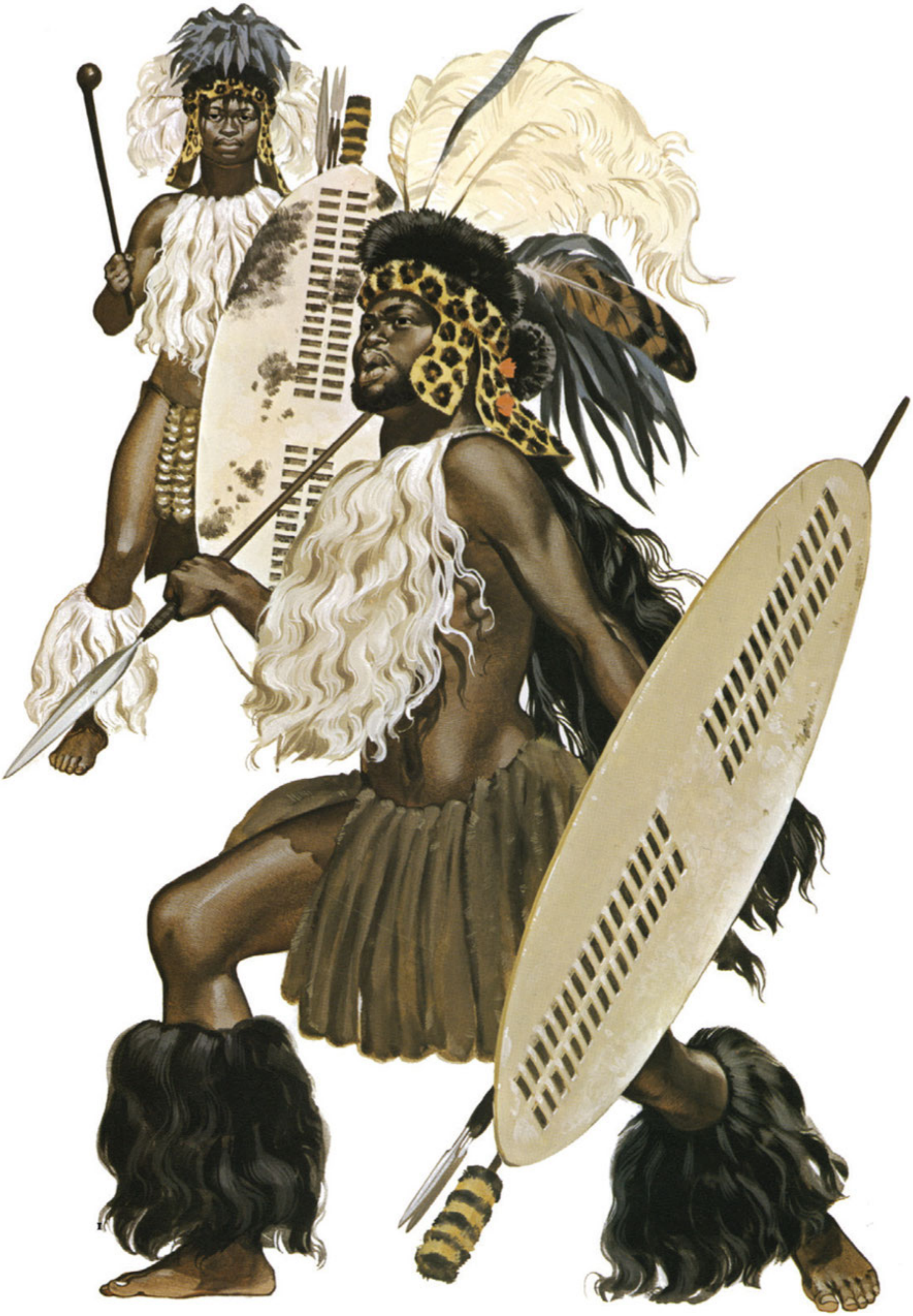
Artwork by Michael Perry, from MAA 421: The Sikh Army 1799–1849, by Ian Heath.

The assumption that all the non-European enemies faced by 19th-century colonial armies were primitively-armed warriors, who stood little chance against disciplined Europeans with up-to-date firearms, is a mistaken generalization. For instance, in India in the 1840s the British came up against a formidable Sikh army created by Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of Lahore (r. 1801–41). With the aid of European instructors, he had multiplied the Punjab’s traditional strength in cavalry by raising infantry battalions and artillery batteries on the European model, trained and equipped to a high standard.

During the First Sikh War (1845–46) the British regulars and East India Company troops paid a shocking price for victory in battles such as Ferozeshah, where they made unimaginative frontal attacks on a Sikh army of some 60,000 men. At Ferozeshah the Sikhs had perhaps 150 cannon, of which the majority were 6-pdrs, 8-pdrs and 9-pounders. The guns were served ‘with extraordinary rapidity and precision’ by crews who defended them to the death – one British witness even wrote that they kissed their cannon as they died. These gunners of a horse battery have tall busby-like turbans, and jackets apparently copied from the British horse artillery branch.

ZULU WARRIORS

1820s–50s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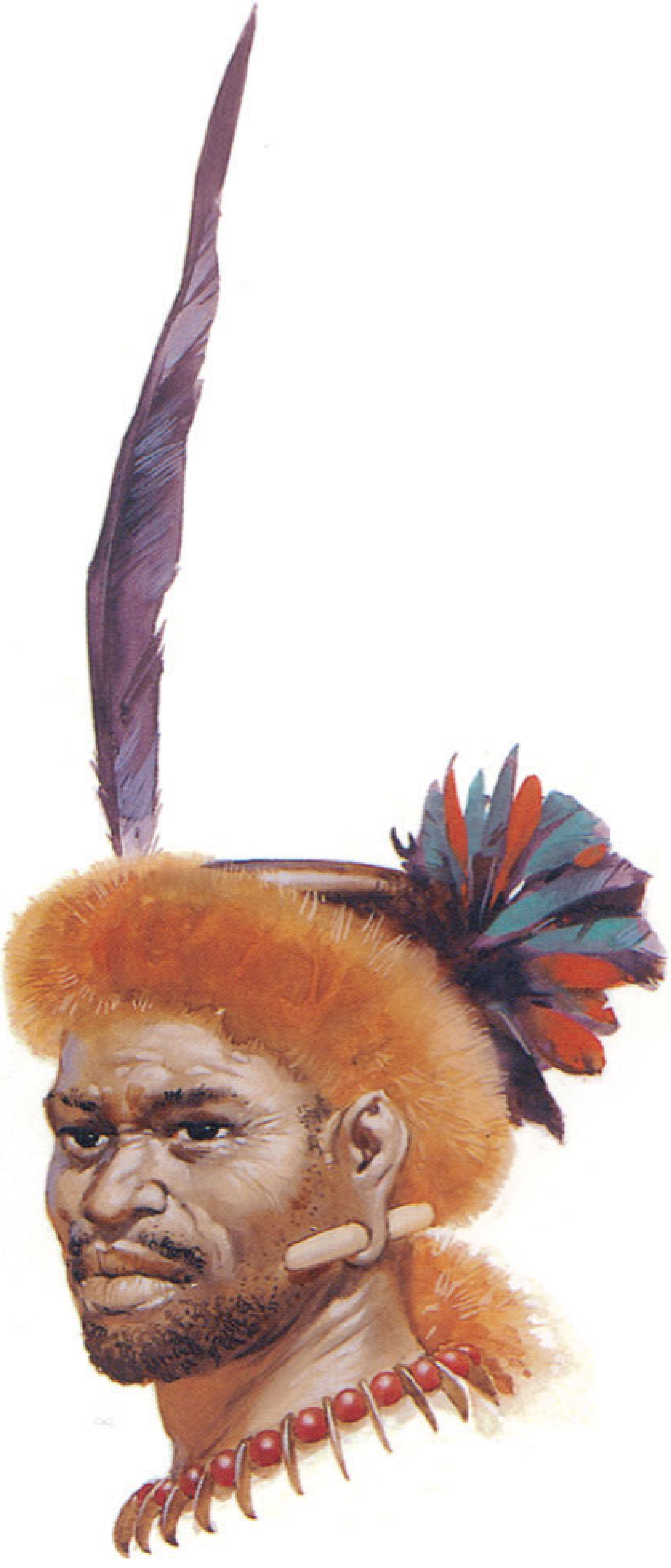
Artwork by Angus McBride, from MAA 57: The Zulu War.

An army equally formidable in a different way was that created in South Africa by Zulu kings, beginning with the great conqueror Shaka (r. 1816–28). When the British goaded King Cetshwayo into war in 1879, they notoriously suffered a shocking defeat at Isandlwana – where some 1,300 troops, half of them British redcoats, were wiped out by the sacrificial charges of disciplined regiments of warriors armed only with spears, but impelled by an extraordinary martial tradition.

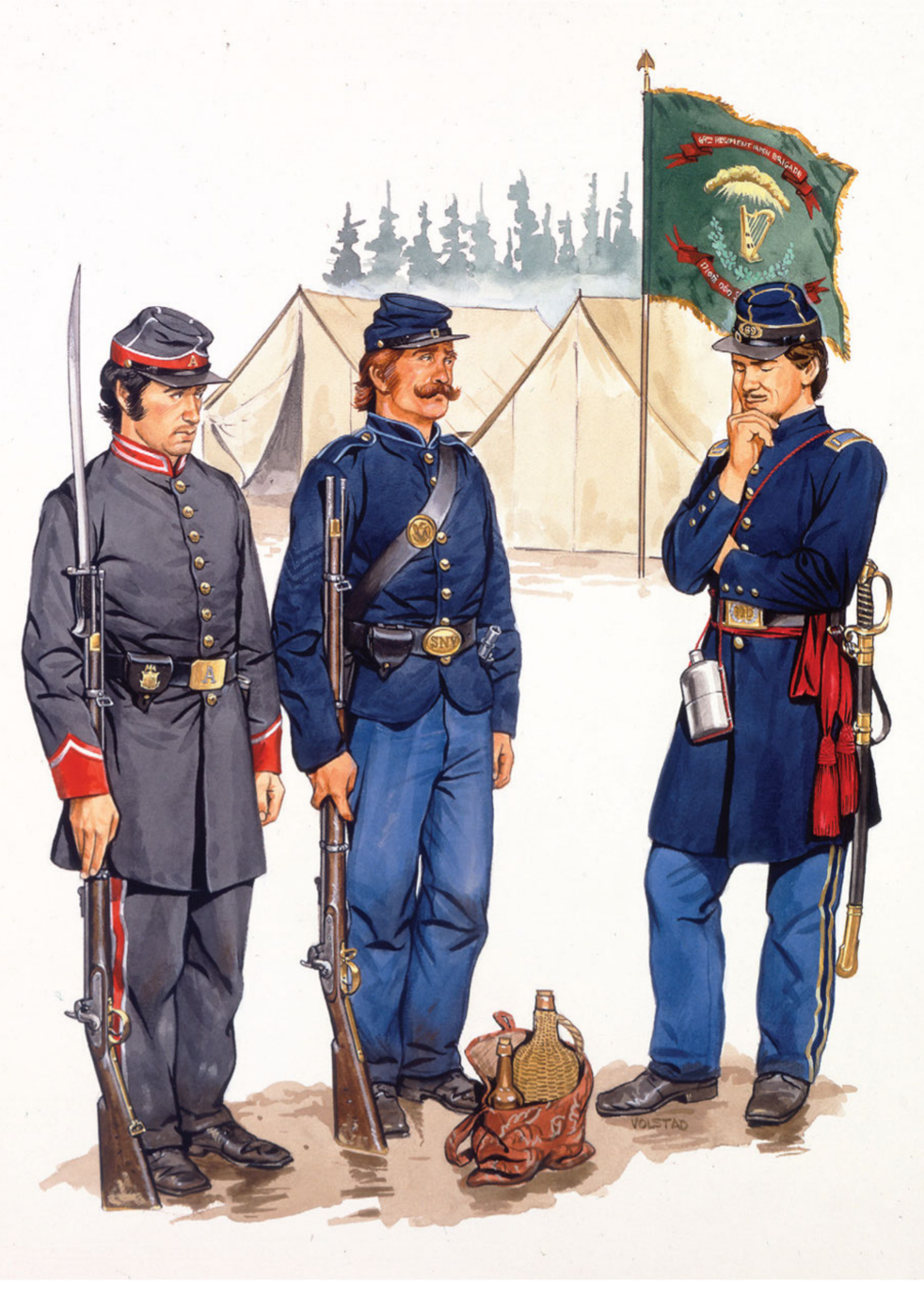
A Zulu regiment (ibutho) was called up as an age group, so neither of those illustrated here fought in 1879. The uGibabanye (top left – the title means ‘to oust the others’) was raised by Shaka in 1821; with the almost-white cowhide shield marking a veteran unit the warrior carries throwing- and stabbing-spears, and an ironwood iwisa club. The impressive finery of the iNdabakawombe (foreground), formed in 1841, is also a sign of royal favour. A headdress of black fur and leopardskin on a basketwork cap supports ostrich, crane, eagle and widowbird feathers, with small red weaver-bird feathers equivalent to bravery decorations. The warrior’s kilt is of monkey-tails, and white and black cow-tails adorn his chest, back and legs. He carries an all-white shield, two throwing-spears, and the iklwa stabbing-spear invented by Shaka.



A high-ranking Zulu warrior, distinguished by a crane feather, a bunch of green and red lourie feathers, and a necklace of blood-red beads and carved bone ‘claws’. Artwork by Angus McBride, from WAR 14: Zulu 1816–1906, by Ian Knight.

UNITED STATES VOLUNTEERS

1862


69TH REGIMENT IRISH BRIGADE
A
A
SNY
69
VOLSTAD

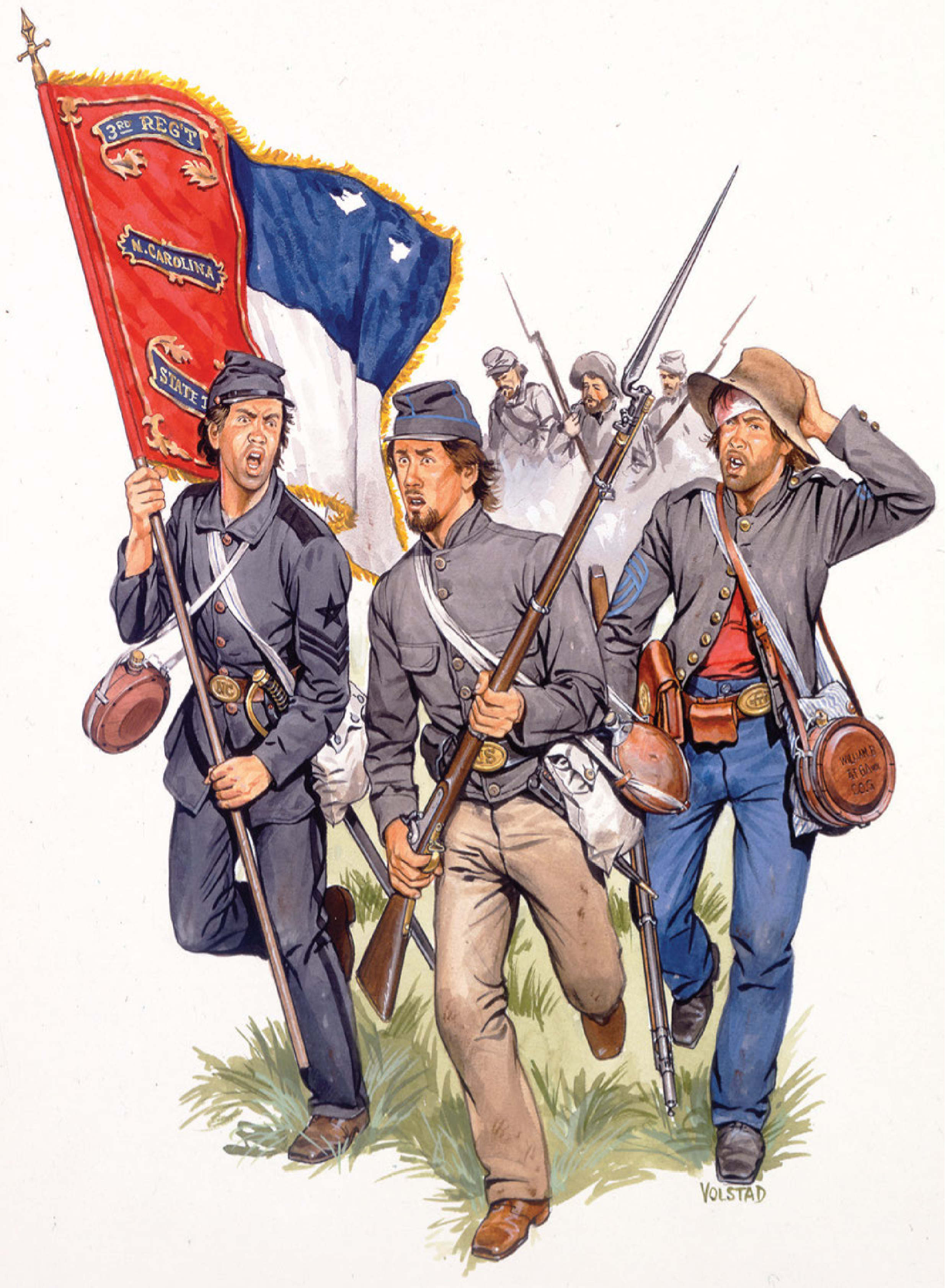
Artwork by Ronald Volstad, from MAA 190: American Civil War Armies (4), by Philip Katcher.

On the outbreak of the American Civil War (1861–65) the hugely-expanding US Army had to absorb pre-war local militia and new state-raised volunteer regiments. The independent militia units had often chosen flashy uniforms based on foreign fashions – French Zouave and Chasseur styles were particularly popular. These exotic outfits soon wore out, to be replaced with designs that at least resembled US Army regulations. For example, in June 1862 the 22nd New York Militia (left) drew blue blouses in exchange for their original grey coats faced with red, which had made them look like Confederate artillerymen.

Despite central regulations and large-scale contracts, variations persisted. The Irishman of the 69th New York Militia (centre) seems to wear the standard dark blue forage cap and ‘sack coat’ with sky-blue trousers, but his state-made uniform has pale blue piping round the shoulder-straps and standing collar. The waist-belt for his percussion-cap pouch and bayonet and the cross-belt for his cartridge box are of government design, but with a state belt buckle. Again, the officer of the 33rd New York Volunteers (right) wears a conventional frockcoat with US Army transverse shoulder-straps of branch and rank, officer’s sash and sword; but officers ordered their own uniforms, and details of his cap and trousers are non-regulation.

CONFEDERATE VOLUNTEERS

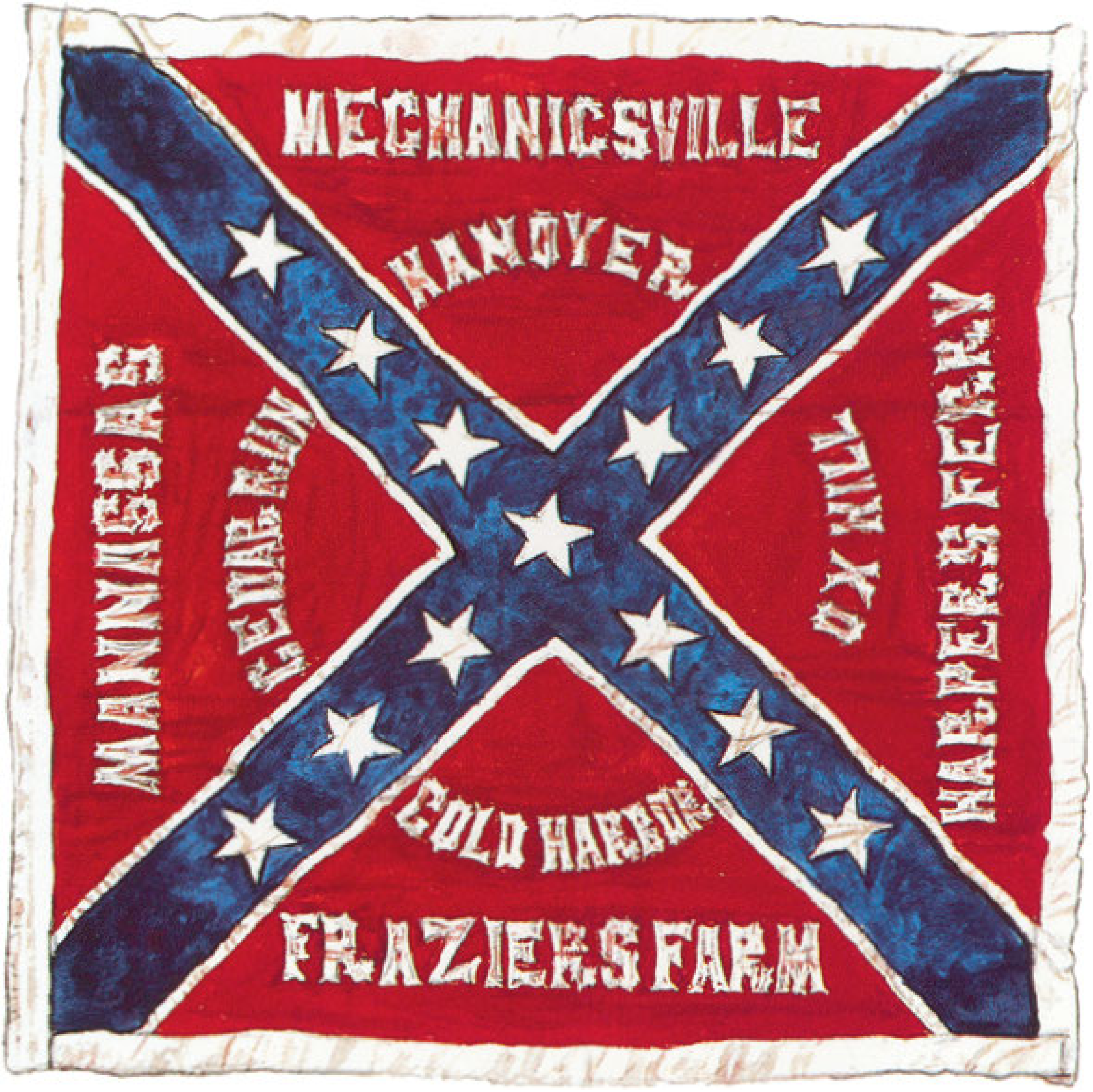
1863


3RD REG'T
N. CAROLINA
STATE T
NC
CS
WILLIAM H.
VOLSTAD

Artwork by Ronald Volstad, from MAA 190: American Civil War Armies (4), by Philip Katcher.

The War Between the States was the first large-scale conflict in which the basic tactics of the Napoleonic Wars were still employed, but now with percussion-lock rifled muskets potentially accurate out to half a mile. Attacking infantry thus had to cross much longer ‘beaten zones’ when mounting assaults, and defending riflemen and artillery could inflict shockingly high casualties. A notorious example was the attack on Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg on 3 July 1863, when about 12,500 men suffered the loss of 6,555 killed, wounded and captured in little more than an hour.

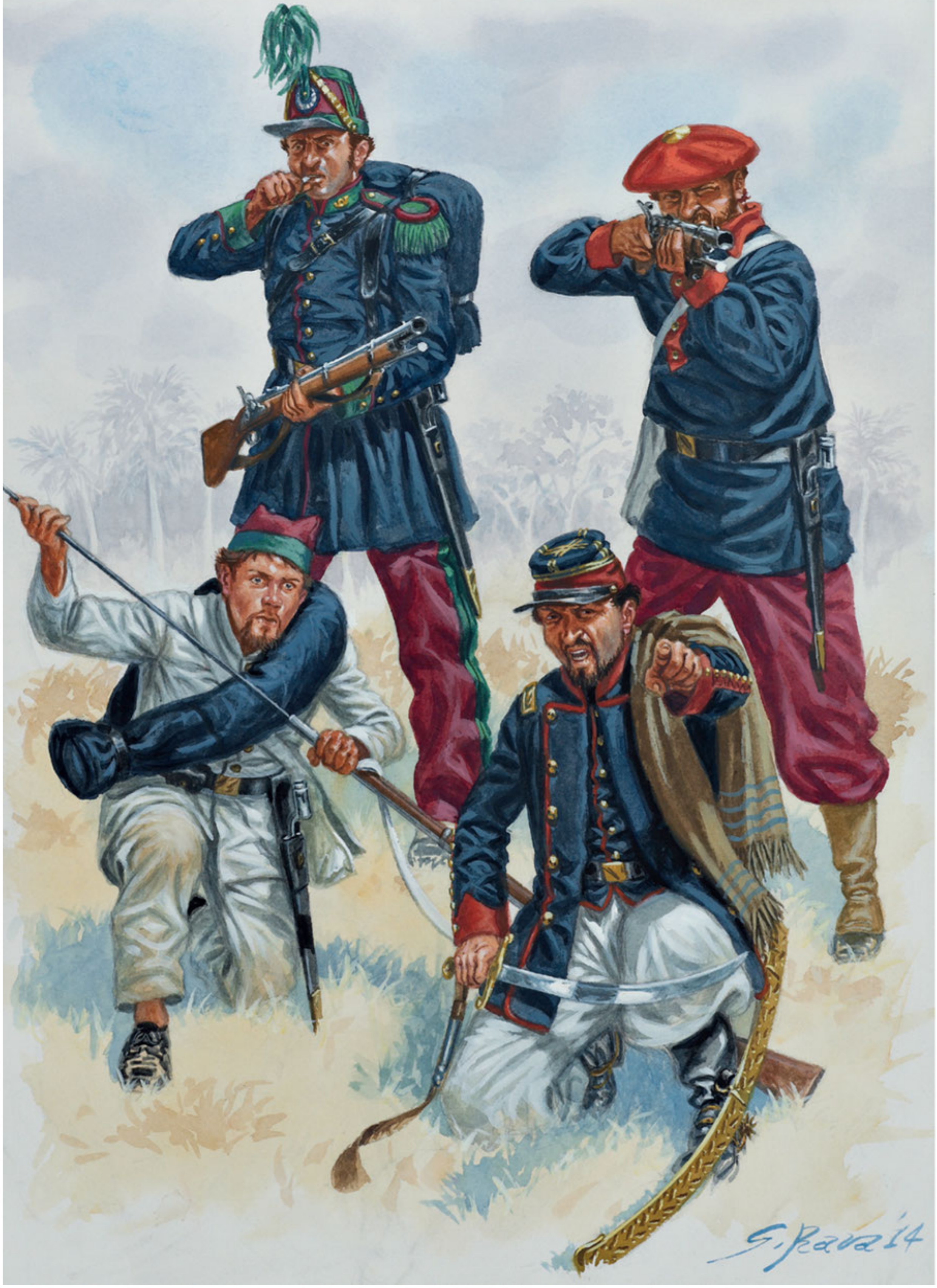
The Confederate States, with far fewer resources than the North, had great difficulty keeping their troops clothed, let alone according to any regulations. Many garments were homespun, and many were captured from Union stores; some were made out-of-state or even abroad, including in Ireland. State variations were numerous – e.g., the black-trimmed uniform of the ordnance sergeant of the 3rd North Carolina State Troops (left). Short ‘stable jackets’ were cheaper to make (centre, 7th Florida Volunteers), as were natural brown-leather accoutrements, and slouch hats kept off the rain better than forage caps (right, 4th Georgia Infantry). Camping gear was of many patterns, when it was carried at all – many soldiers relied upon little more than a blanket-roll, a knife, a spoon and a mug.


MECHANICSVILLE
HANOVER
MANNASSAS
CEDAR RUN
OX HILL
HARPERS FERRY
COLD HARBOR
FRAZIERS FARM

Flag of the 28th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. Artwork by Rick Scollins, from MAA 252: Flags of the American Civil War (1), by Philip Katcher.

URUGUAYAN TROOPS

1865


G. Rava '14

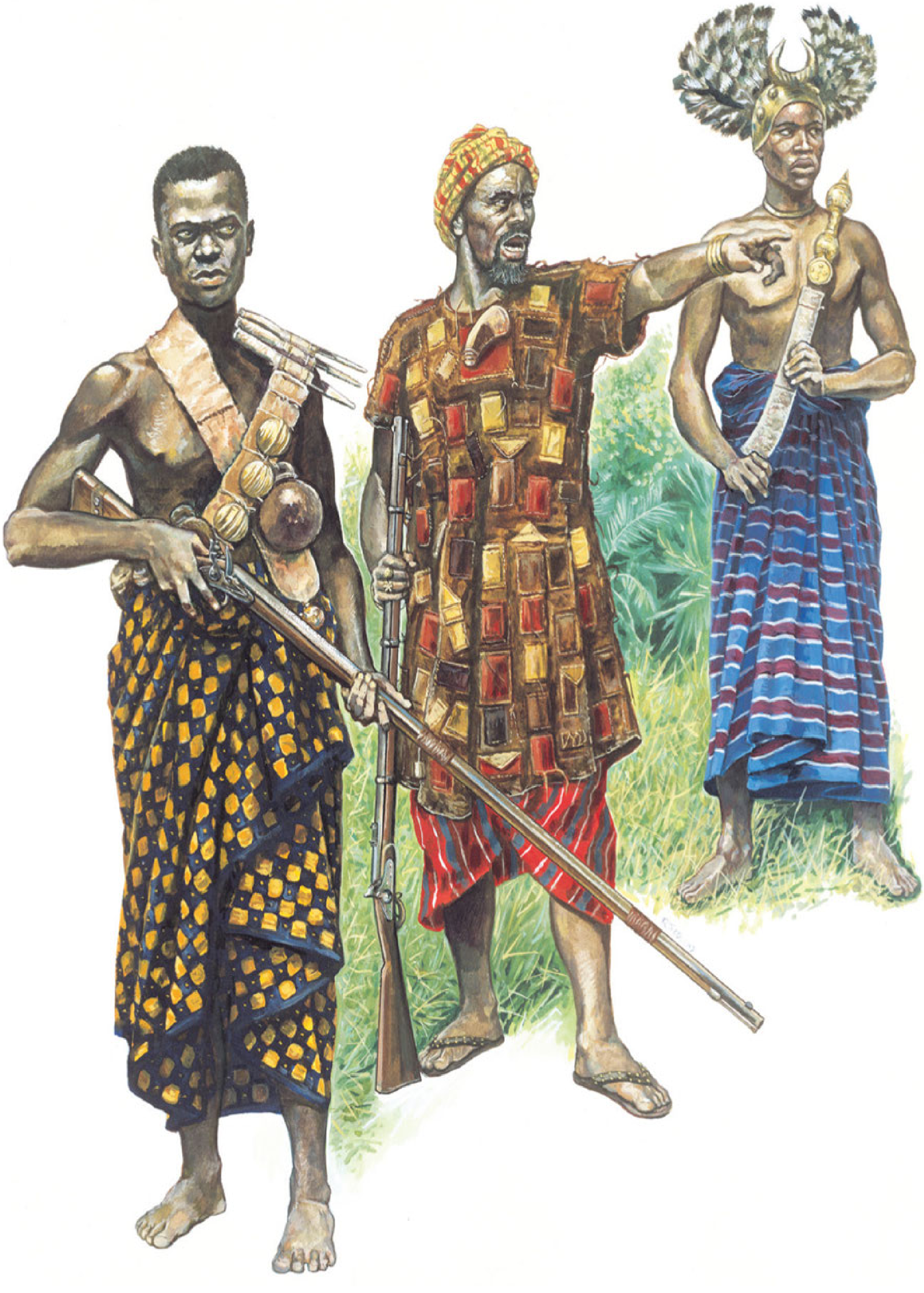
Artwork by Giuseppe Rava, from MAA 499: Armies of the War of the Triple Alliance 1864–70, by Gabriele Esposito.

The War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70) pitted Paraguay against Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. The Paraguayan dictator Francisco Solàno Lopez led his country not just to defeat, but almost to extinction – it lost well over 60 per cent of its entire population to violence, famine and disease. The war was fought in humid forest and swamp terrain; some of the weapons equalled the technology of the American Civil War, but the logistics, transport and medical care were primitive. When more-or-less inventing these armies for their first major conventional campaigns, the generals looked to Europe for examples. Their tactics, and often their soldiers' courage, were Napoleonic, but training and leadership seldom reached that level.

The most common dress throughout the war was the simple white of the Latin American campesino, perhaps with a forage cap (bottom left). Other Uruguayan uniforms were modelled on foreign styles: the 'Florida' Infantry Battalion (top left), on French 1845 regulations; the 'Voluntarios de Libertad' (top right) on the blouse and beret of the Spanish Carlists; and the officer of the 'Soriano' Cavalry (bottom right) on the French Second Empire caban jacket, but with local gaucho trousers and blanket poncho.

ASHANTI WARRIORS, WEST AFRICA

1874



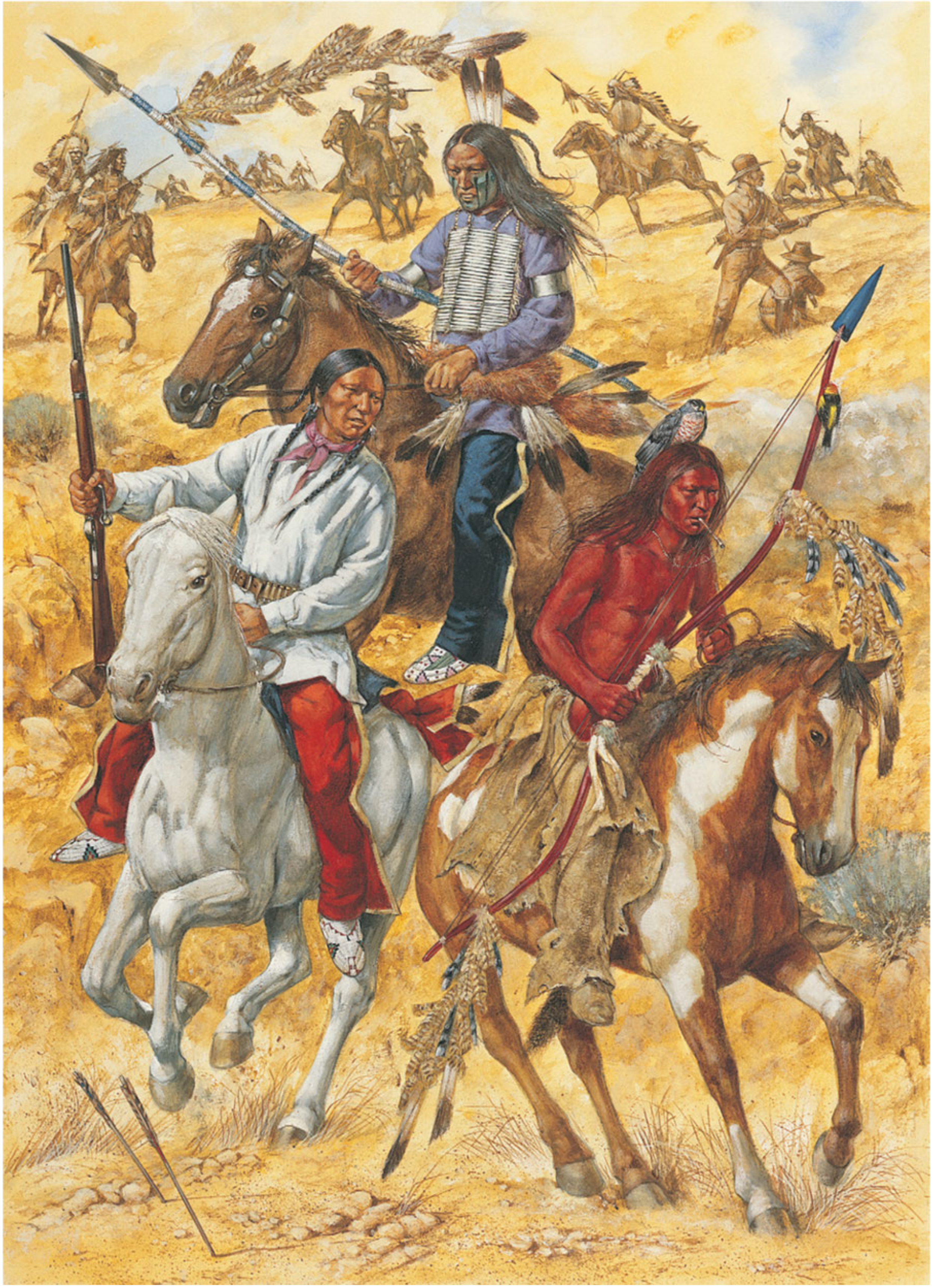
Artwork by Rick Scollins, from MAA 215: Queen Victoria's Enemies (2), by Ian Knight.

Britain's brief West African war against the Ashanti people of modern Ghana was not a colonial landgrab, but an essentially commercial quarrel. The Ashanti king, Kofi Karikari, could field about 20,000 brave and skilled forest fighters; but his envoys' demands were refused, and in January 1874 General Wolesley (a rising star of the British Army) led a well-prepared expedition into his territory. The main Ashanti army pulled back – perhaps due to the envoys' report of a Gatling gun demonstration – but musketeers made two effective attacks on the jungle column before it reached and destroyed the abandoned capital, Kumasi. King Kofi had fled, and Wolesley withdrew (without ever using his Gatlings).

West African monarchs had been trading gold and slaves for muskets since about 1660, and by 1874 all Ashanti soldiers had long flintlocks, often bound with copper wire and decorated with shells (left). They carried powder in gourds, ball in round containers, and several knives for head-hunting, all on 'war belts'. Their leaders (centre) were distinguished by gold ornaments, and a characteristic batakari garment covered with leather pouches containing protective amulets. Scimitars were symbolic of high government office, as were feathered headdresses (right).

CHEYENNE AND LAKOTA WARRIORS

1876



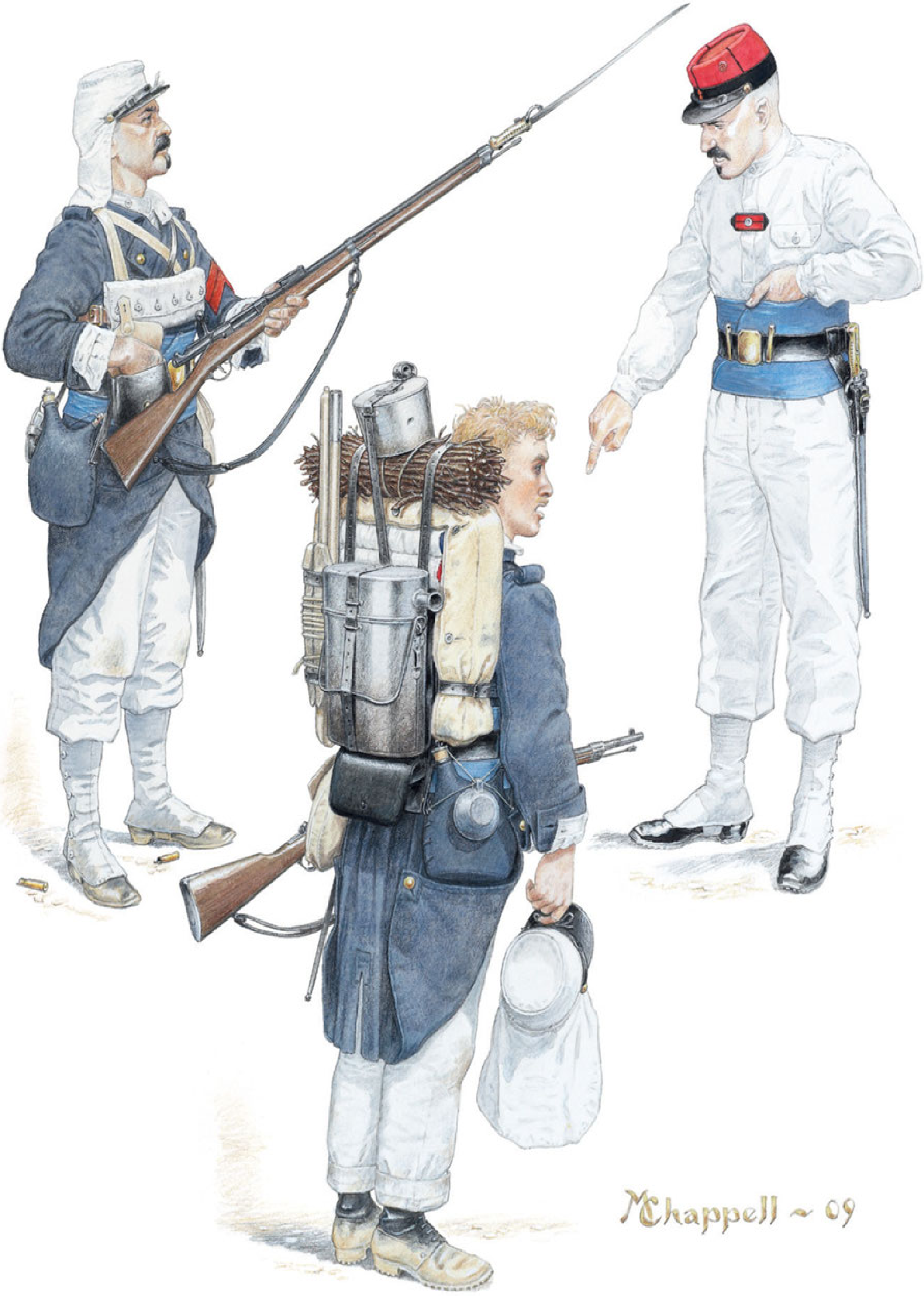
Artwork by Richard Hook, from MAA 408: Warriors at the Little Bighorn 1876.

The westwards surge of the United States paralleled Europe’s colonial wars, with much the same result, but the battle of the Little Bighorn river in June 1876 was an iconic moment of resistance by the Plains peoples. Native American oral and pictorial records allow some reconstructions of named individuals who fought at ‘Custer’s Last Stand’. It is clear that Lakota and Cheyenne warriors wore a wide variety of trade and traditional clothing, and carried weapons ranging from lances and bows to the most modern firearms.

The Arikara/Cheyenne Two Moon (left), who fought against both Reno’s and Keogh’s troops, wears tradecloth garments apart from his mocassins, and carries a carbine and cartridge-belt captured days previously at the battle of the Rosebud. His son’s drawings show Bad Heart Bull (centre), an Oglala who also fought against Reno, wearing tradecloth but with a hairpipe breastplate; his unstrung bow-lance with a feather trailer, and the fox skin decorated with eagle feathers at his waist, mark his prominence in the Kit Fox society. The entirely red-painted Brave Wolf (right) was a Cheyenne ‘contrary’; he wore clothes made from old lodge skins, and he too carried a sacred ‘thunder-bow’ with elaborate hawk, eagle and owl-feather trailers.

FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION, ALGERIA

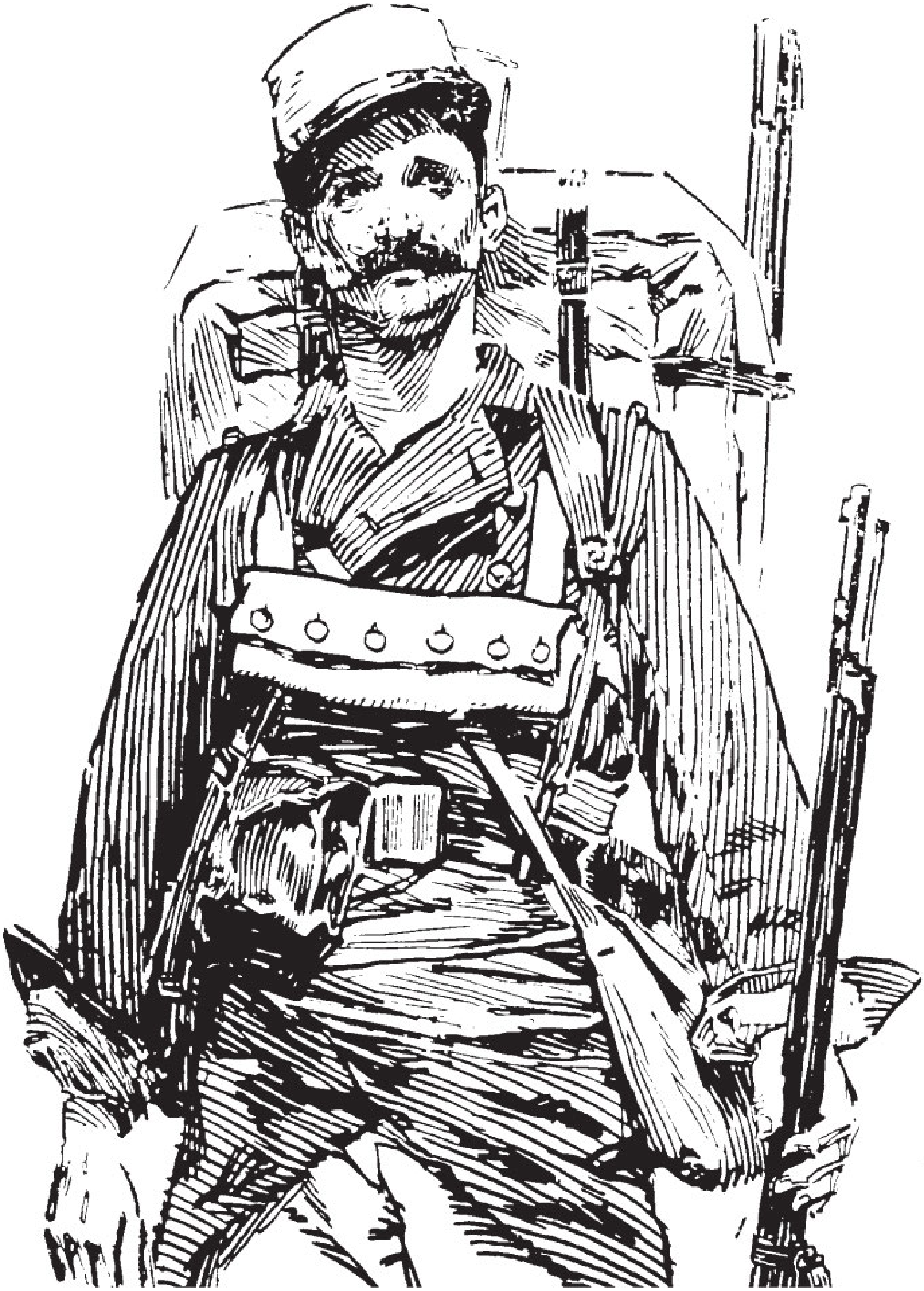
1882


MChappell ~ 09

Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 461: The French Foreign Legion 1872–1914, by Martin Windrow.

As France’s Army of Africa pushed exploratory expeditions southwards into the unpenetrated desert and hills of southern Oran Department, the local Zouave regiments were usually kept in the cultivated north. The main white infantry committed to these punishing operations were battalions of the renowned Foreign Legion, which at this date included many refugees from the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine.

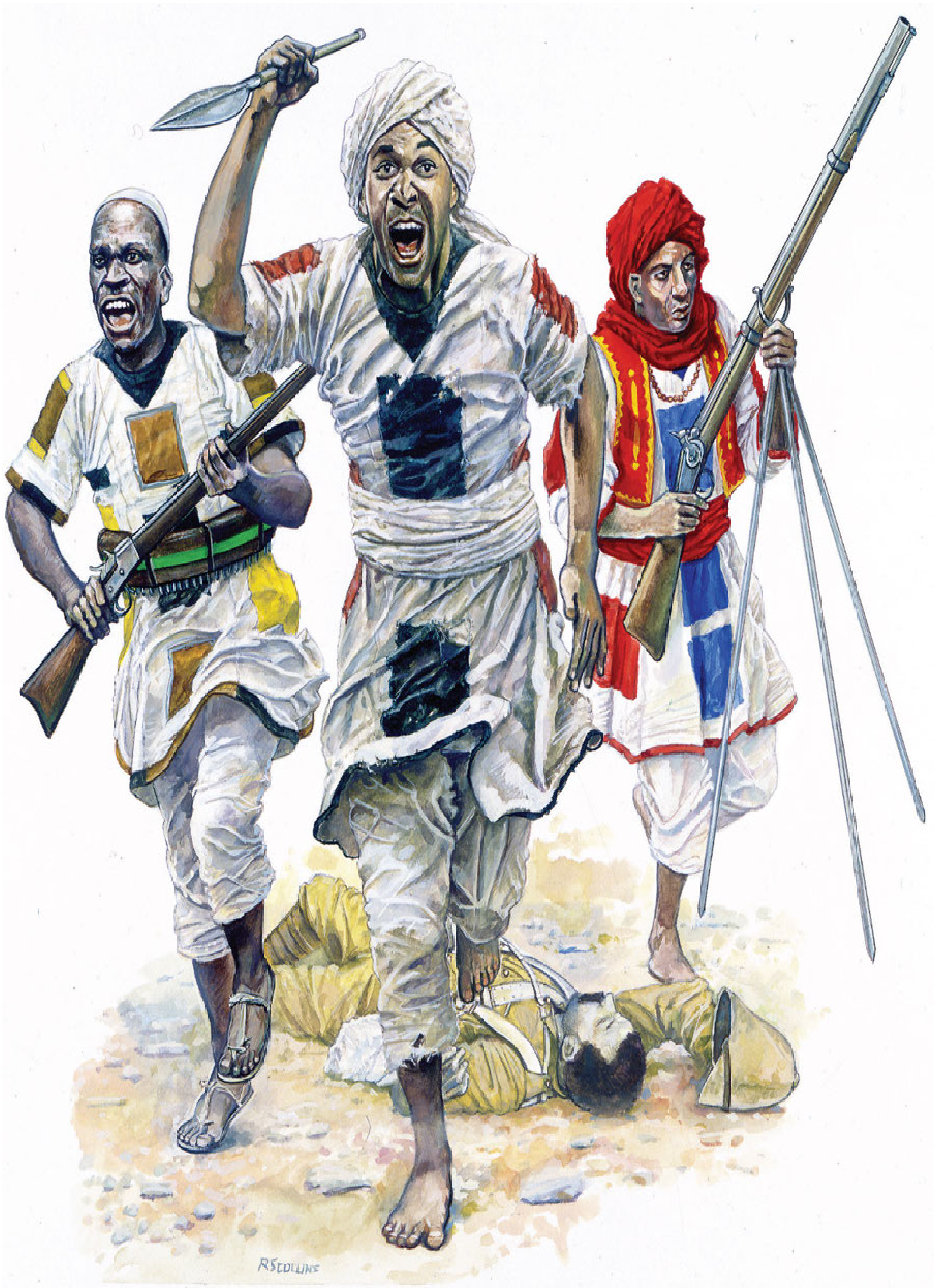
Hot-season barracks dress (right) was white fatigues, with the Legion’s blue body-belt and the French infantry képi. Since the 1850s French Army field dress in all seasons had been the greatcoat rather than a tunic; it was worn in North Africa over the white fatigues, with the body-belt and a curtained white cap-cover (left). Red left-sleeve chevrons each marked five years’ completed service – setting these long-service volunteers apart from France’s conscript Metropolitan Army. The chest-pouch invented by the Legion’s commander, Colonel de Négrier, gave easy access to cartridges when firing prone. The Legion prided itself on being able to march, and if necessary fight, with huge packs (centre) that enabled overnight camping without any commissariat support except camels with water-kegs. The single-shot 11mm 1874 Gras rifle had a bayonet long enough to unhorse a rider.



Impression of a legionnaire in the field 1881–82. Reconstruction by Mahut, c.1911.

MAHDIST WARRIORS, SUDAN

1898


RSCOLLINS

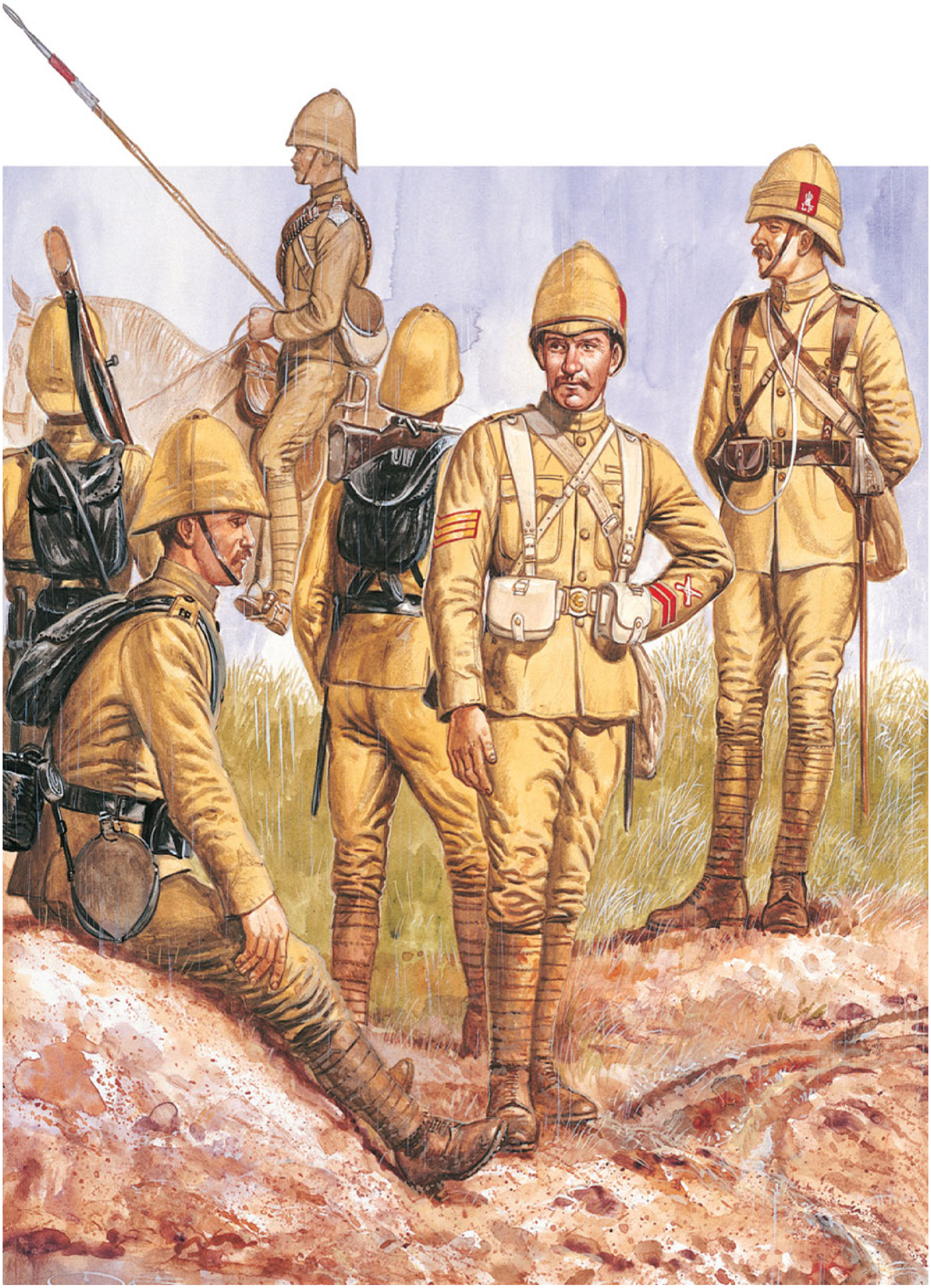
Artwork by Rick Scollins, from MAA 215: Queen Victoria's Enemies (2), by Ian Knight.

The most numerous army faced by late Victorian British colonial troops were the Sudanese followers of the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad, a Muslim religious leader who rose against Britain's Egyptian client state in 1881. His jihad attracted many diverse warriors from around the Red Sea; in 1882 they wiped out an Egyptian column led by General Hicks, and in 1885 massacred Colonel Gordon's garrison in Khartoum. After the Mahdi's death his successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi, resisted a British reconquest of the Sudan in 1896. In September 1898 General Kitchener's Anglo-Egyptian army, equipped with magazine rifles and Maxim machine guns, inflicted a final crushing defeat.

The Sudanese peasant's traditional white jibbeh was naturally patched from wear-and-tear, and the Mahdi ordered colourfully-patched smocks as the uniform of his ansar ('helpers'). The semi-regular jihadiyya rifleman (left) carries a Remington rolling-block rifle and a cartridge belt taken from a dead Egyptian soldier. Most Mahdist warriors had only stabbing-spears (centre); but the khashkhashan section of the Khalifa's bodyguard (right) were armed with heavy percussion-lock elephant-guns fired from tripod rests, and wore this specific uniform.

BRITISH INFANTRY, SECOND BOER WAR

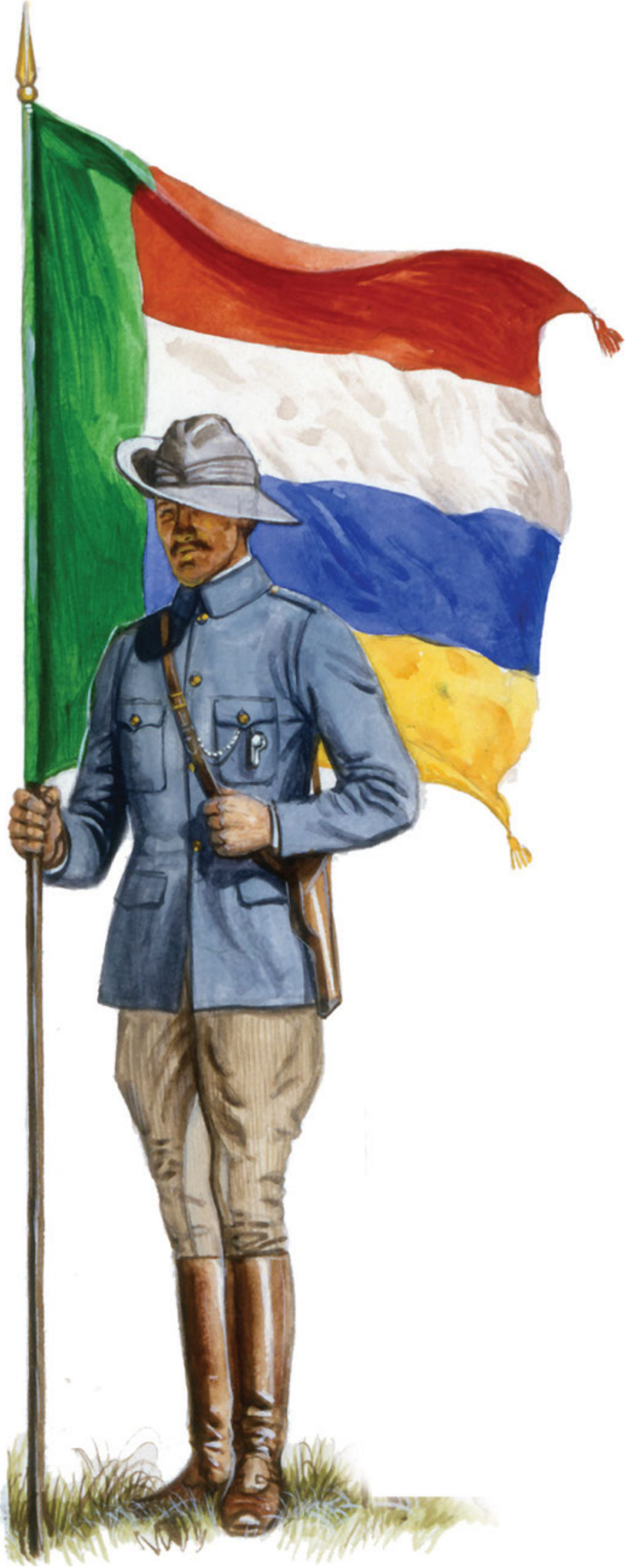
1899/1900



Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 303: The Boer Wars (2), by Ian Knight.

In 1880–81 the Dutch-descended Boer settlers of the Transvaal Republic in South Africa rebelled against a recent British annexation negotiated by some of their leaders. Bred to the saddle and the rifle from boyhood, these tough frontiersmen shot a red-coated British force to bits before an uneasy peace was concluded. The discovery of rich goldmines exacerbated relations, however, and in October 1899 the now more heavily armed Boers declared war on Britain. A reinforced British and Dominion army both won and lost conventional engagements, but the war ground down into bitter and controversial counter-guerrilla operations before the Boers surrendered in May 1902.

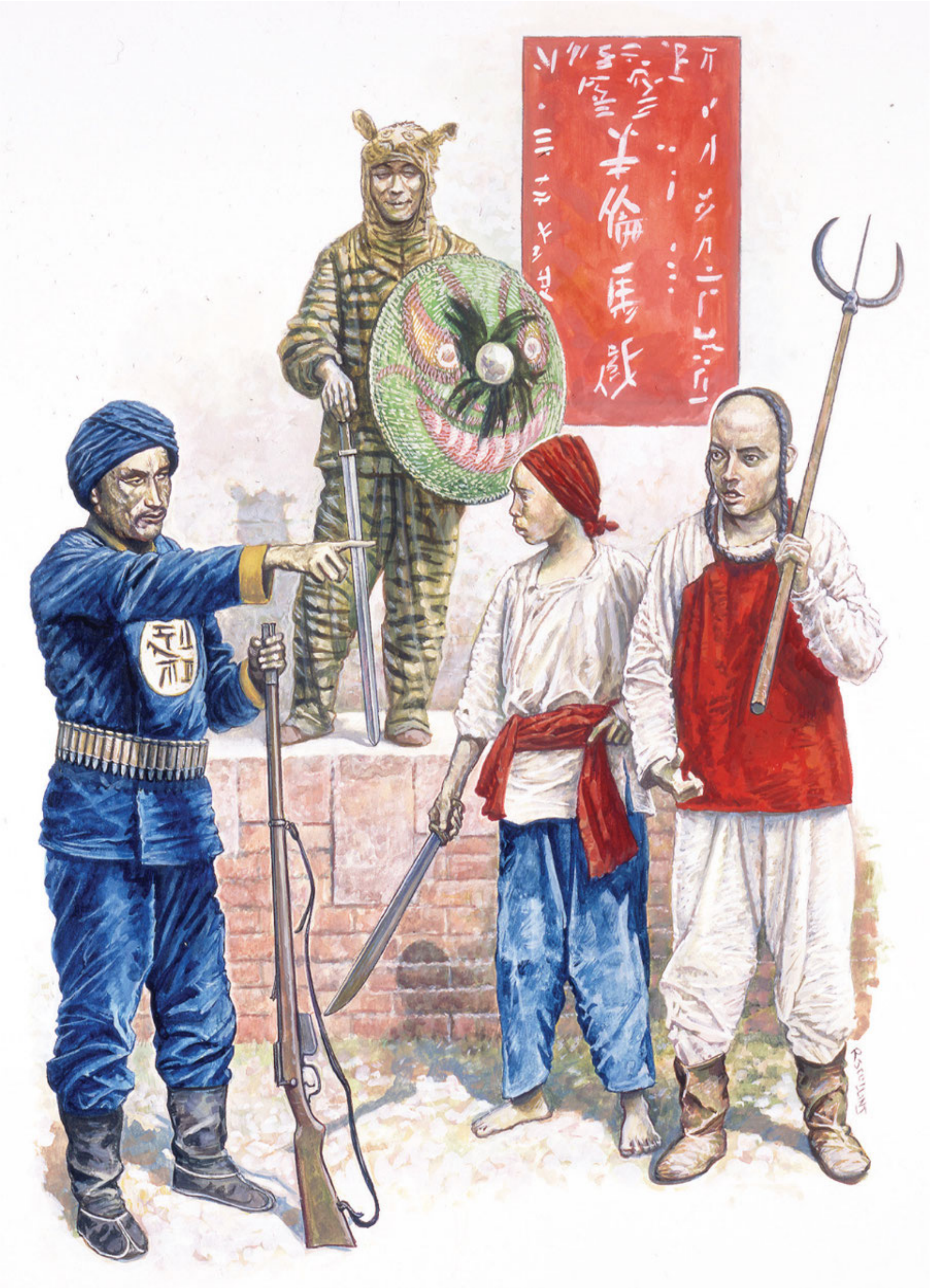
The British troops no longer presented scarlet targets to long-range Boer marksmen; since 1897 they had been issued light dust-coloured ‘khaki’ uniforms for field service overseas. The white cork helmets were fitted with khaki covers, sometimes with a coloured side-patch showing unit identification (centre and right). The .303in Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifle had a ten-round magazine; it was capable of rapid fire, and sighted to more than a mile. This smaller calibre allowed more cartridges to be carried, and the Slade-Wallace belt-and-haversack equipment included pouches for 100 rounds.



Boer officer, foreign volunteer contingent, 1899.

CHINESE FIGHTERS, BOXER UPRISING

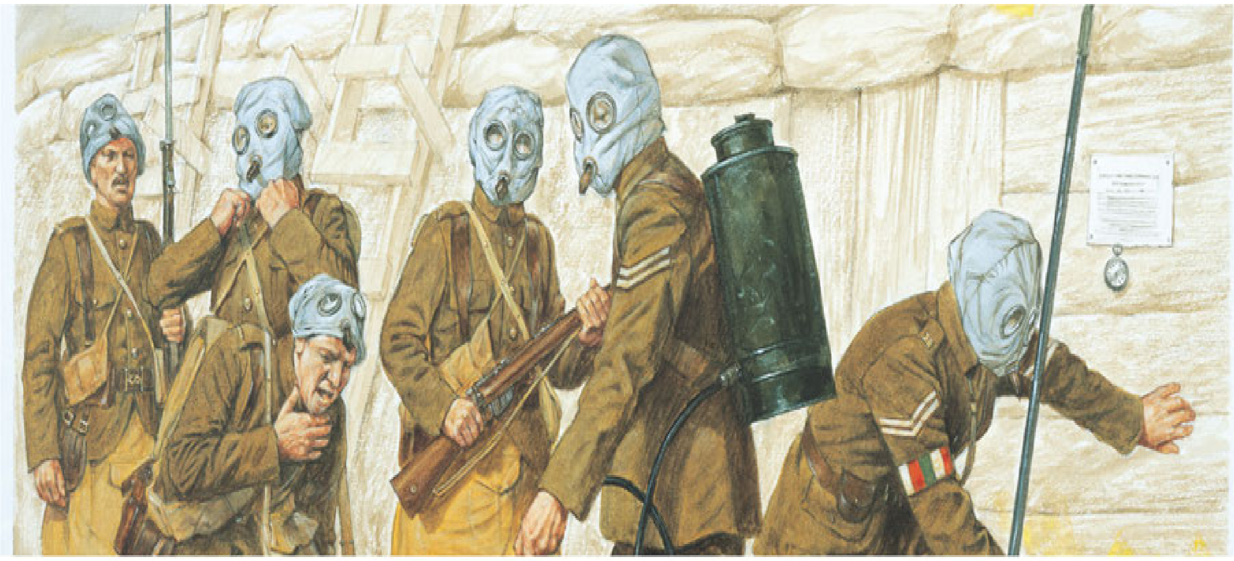
1899/1900


R Scollins

Artwork by Rick Scollins, from MAA 224: Queen Victoria's Enemies (4), by Ian Knight.

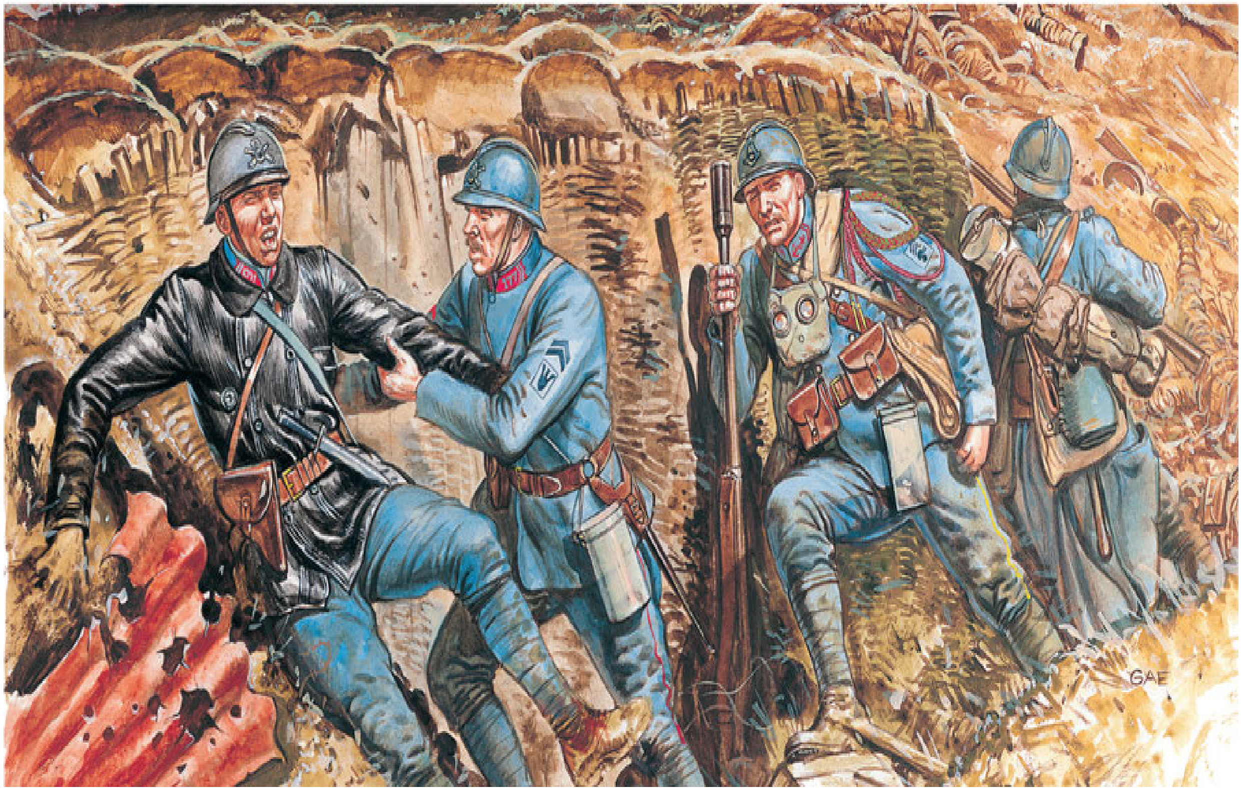
Since the mid 19th century the Chinese Empire had been humiliated by the Western powers, being forced by modern military pressure to grant access for merchants (including opium dealers) and missionaries. This caused huge resentment; and in 1899 a grassroots secret society – Yi-he quan, 'Boxers United in Righteousness' – began killing foreigners and cutting communications in northern China. In summer 1900 they flooded into Beijing where, with encouragement from within the court of the Empress Tz'u-hsi, they subjected the foreign Legation quarter to a violent 55-day siege before an eight-nation relief army fought its way through.

Chinese regular troops showed very uneven enthusiasm for fighting the 'Boxers' even before the Imperial court declared war on the foreign powers in June 1900. Some had Western-style training and weapons, and uniform clothing with unit identifications on a white chest patch (left). The rebels rejected firearms on ideological grounds, so carried only traditional weapons; they wore white or blue everyday clothing, with red turbans, sashes or aprons marking their allegiance to the Yi-he quan (right). A pro-Boxer courtier, Prince Tuan, revived a traditional type of skirmishers, the 'Tiger-men', who wore a striped costume (centre).



WORLD WAR I

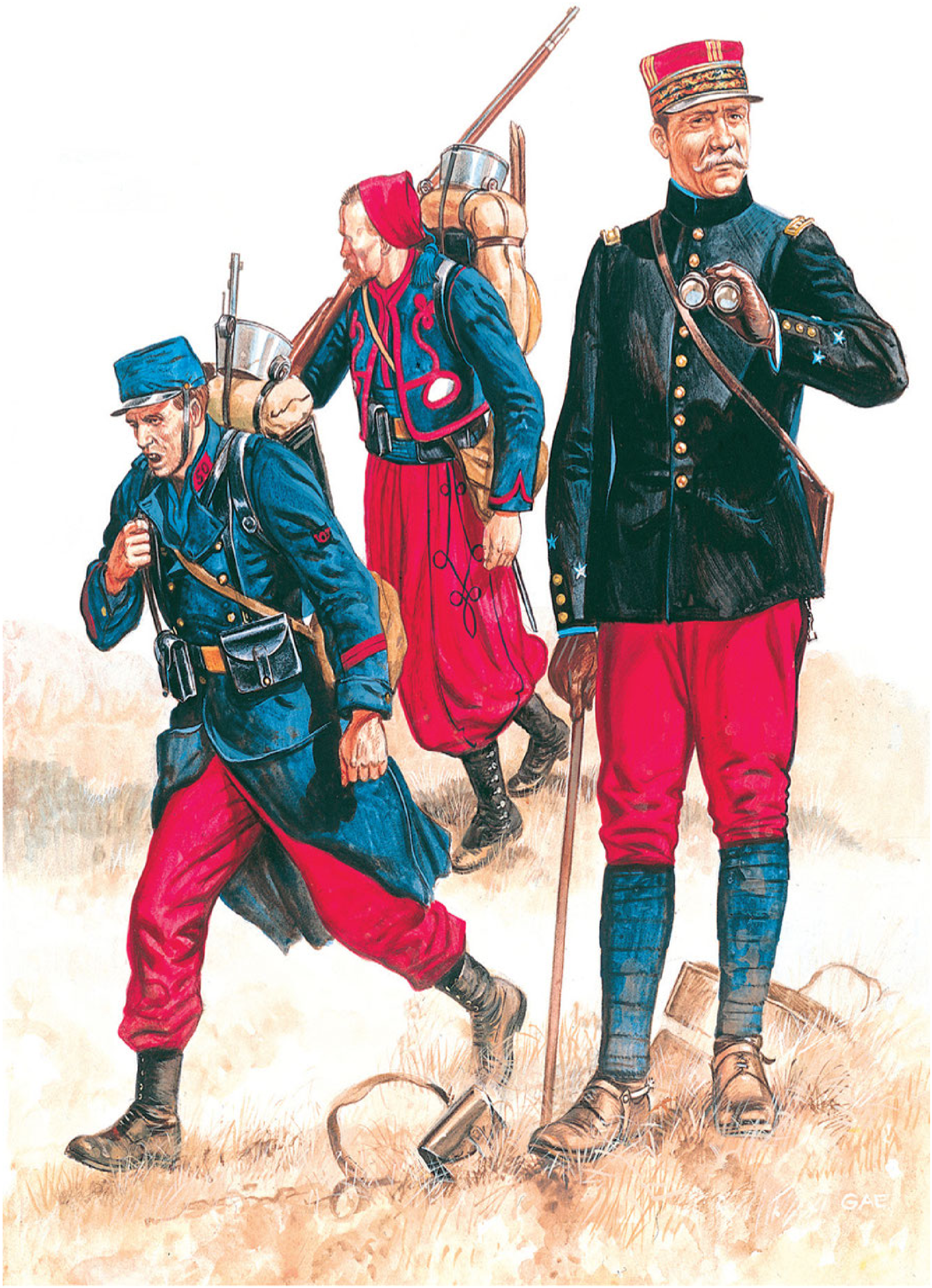
1914–1918



Artwork by Richard Hook, from ELI 150: World War I Gas Warfare Tactics and Equipment, by Simon Jones (top); and by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 286: The French Army 1914–18, by Ian Sumner (bottom).

FRENCH TROOPS

1914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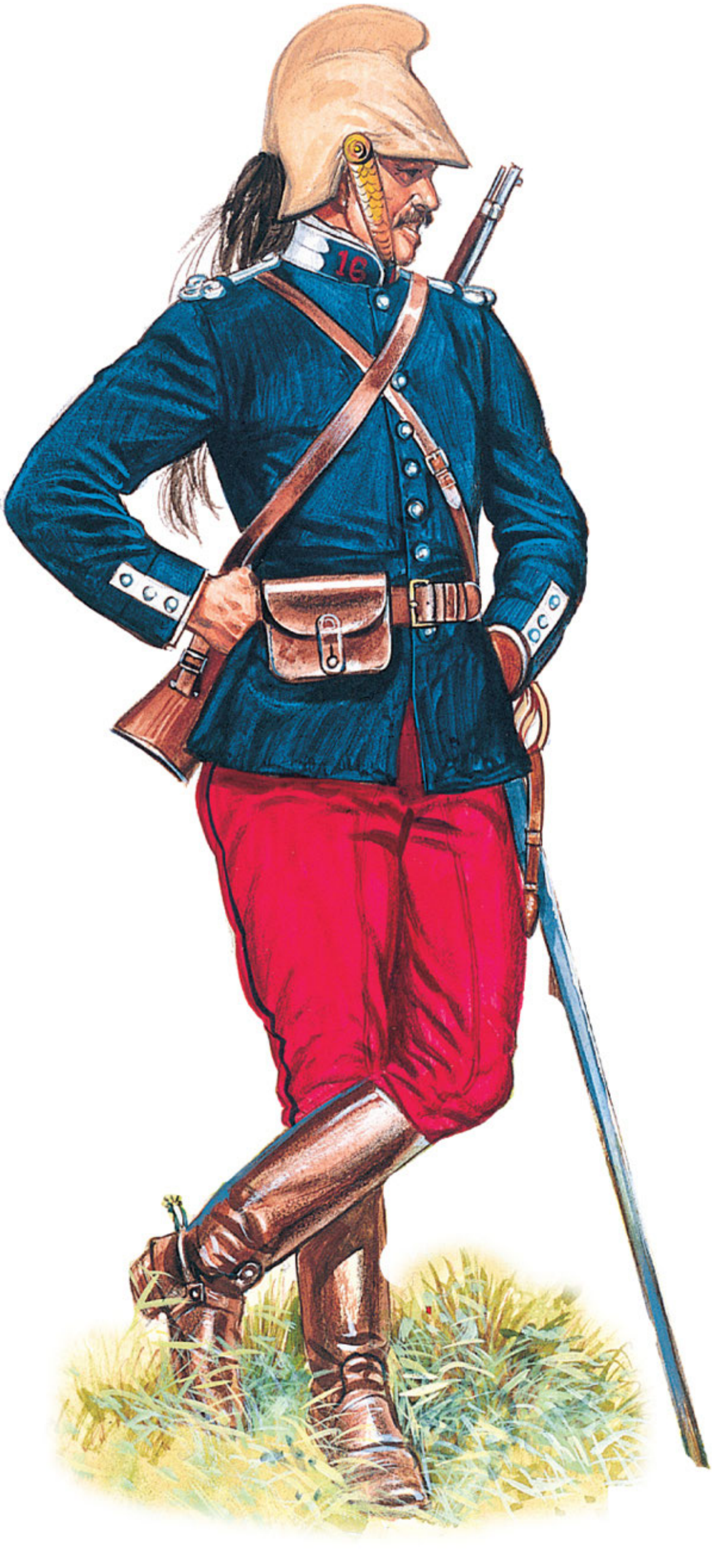
GAE

Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 286: The French Army 1914–18, by Ian Sumner.

For the regulars of the British Army, accustomed to fighting anywhere in the world, their experience against an essentially European enemy in the Boer Wars had brought home the danger from long-range modern firepower. But the French Metropolitan home army and their Colonial troops were separate organizations; only the latter had seen any recent combat (and not against modern opposition), and had been issued khaki clothing only for tropical campaigns. In 1914 France could mobilize 4 million conscripts and reserves – but some of the cavalry were still wearing Waterloo-style cuirasses.

The French line infantry of 1914 (left) were hardly distinguishable from those of 1870 – the only concession to ‘concealment’ being a duller blue cover for the képi – while the Zouaves (centre) and other North African-raised units retained Turkish-style costumes dating from the mid 19th century. In the first months of rapid manoeuvre-warfare the French tactical emphasis on the importance of aggressive infantry charges cost their highly visible troops dreadful casualties in the ‘Battle of the Frontiers’. Although a touch of brilliance under pressure enabled them to stop the Germans on the Marne and save Paris, many fairly elderly generals (right) proved unequal to their tasks.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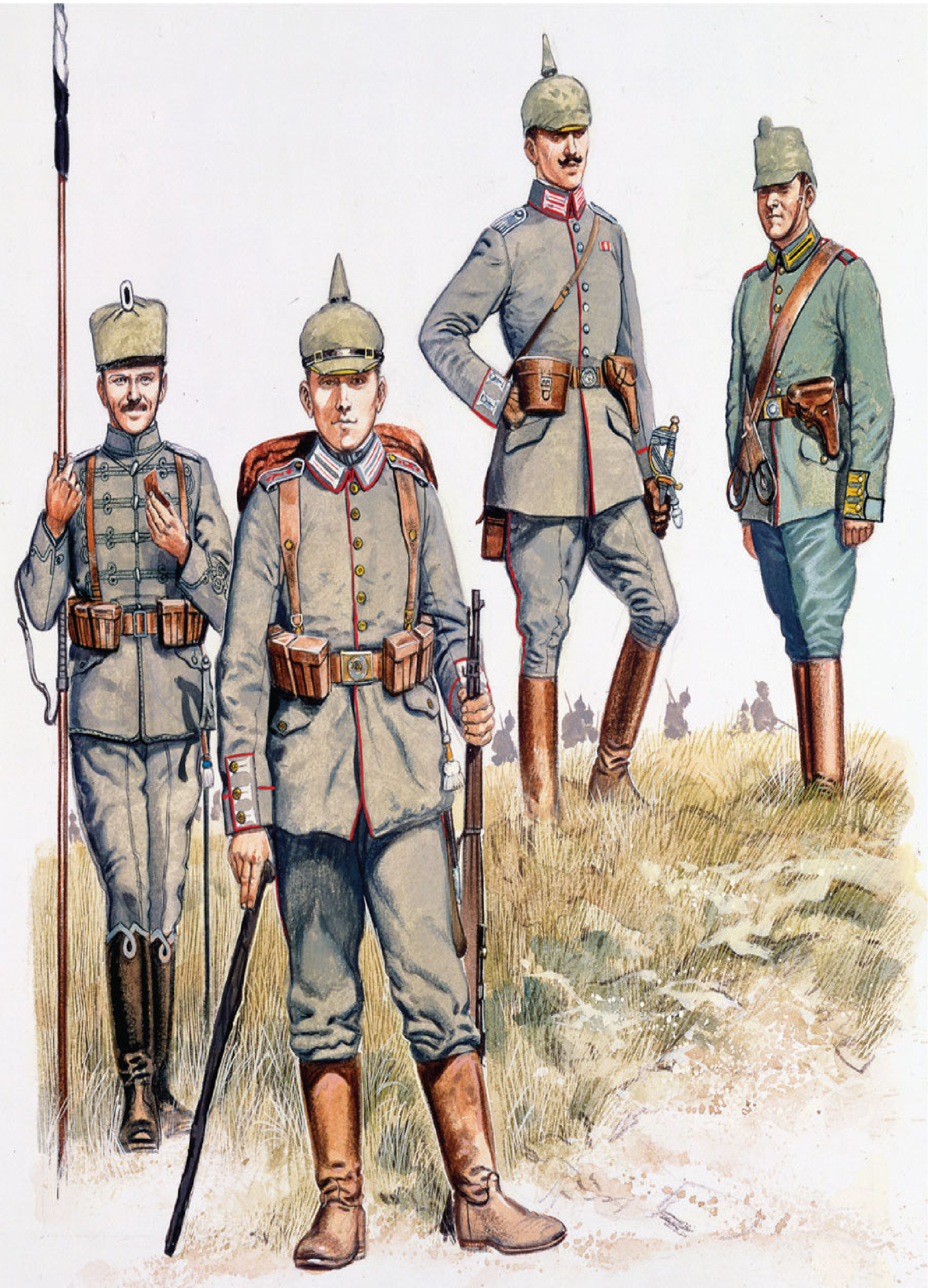
Trooper, 16e Régiment de Dragoons, France, 1914.

GERMAN TROOPS

1914



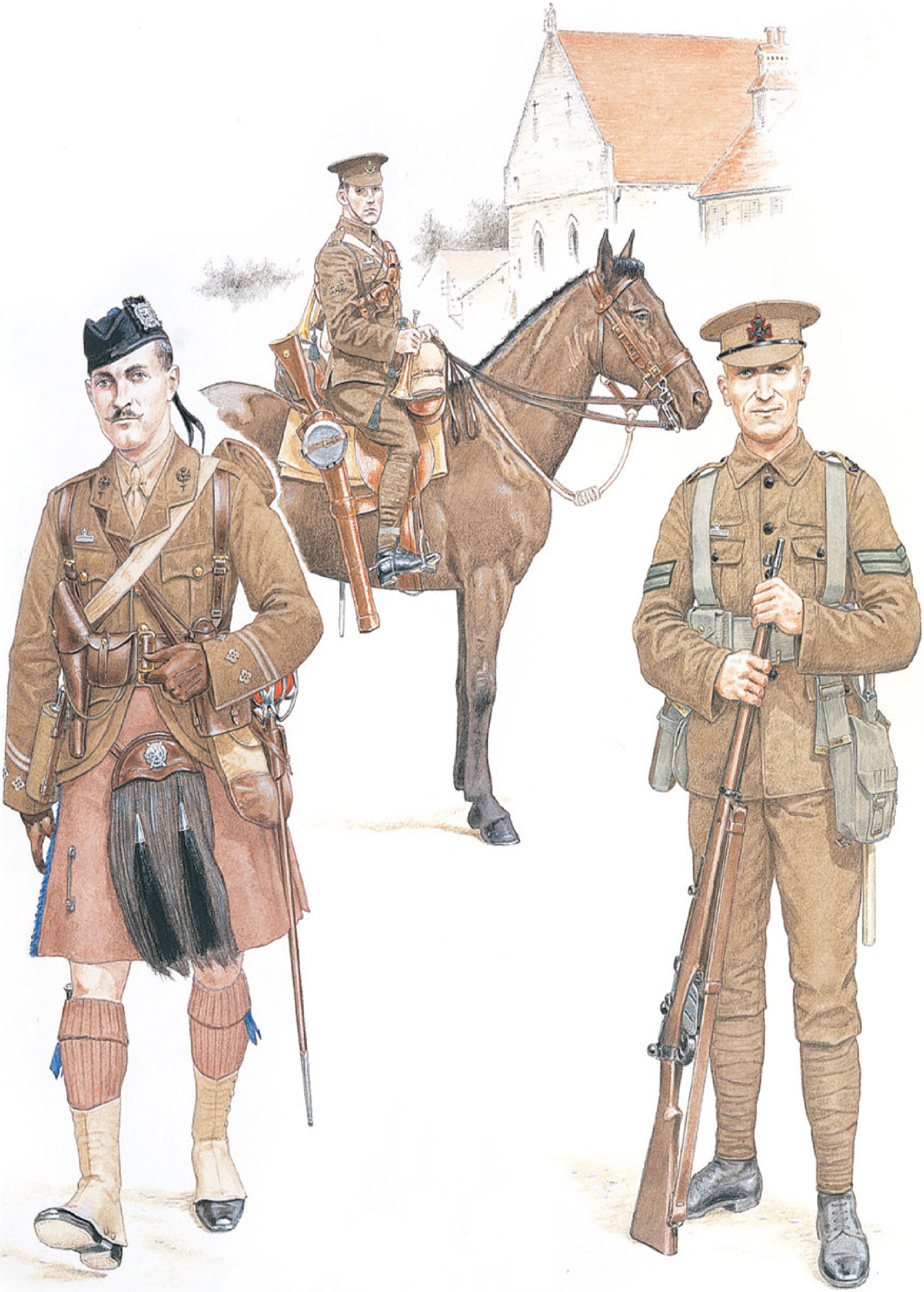
Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 80: The German Army 1914–18, by D S V Fosten and R J Marrion.

By 1914 the large conscript army of the Prussian-ruled German Empire was the most modern in the world. Able to mobilize 5 million men by means of a comprehensive railway network, the professional General Staff planned for war on two fronts. They would hold the Russians in the East while a slashing right-hook attack knocked France out of the war, thus allowing decisive reinforcement of the Russian Front. In the event, however, by the end of 1914 Germany's Western Front had congealed into static trench lines that ran 400 miles, from the English Channel to Switzerland.

In 1910 Germany had adopted inconspicuous uniforms in shades of greenish 'field-grey'. Although drab field covers were issued for the leather Pickelhaube helmets and Jäger shakos, tunics bore branch-colour piping, decorative buttoned cuffs and tails, and, for Guard units, traditional lace bars (Litzen) at collar and cuff (second left), while bayonets still had ornamental woollen 'knots' in a complex colour sequence. Like the tall leather marching-boots, all this made the 'Landser' an expensive soldier to dress. The integrated 1909 equipment included cartridge pouches for the 7.92mm Mauser rifle, a knapsack, rolled greatcoat and groundsheet/tent-section, messtins, water-bottle and haversack.

BRITISH TERRITORIALS

1914–15



Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 391: The British Army in World War I (1).

In summer 1914 Britain’s relatively tiny Regular Army could send only 160,000 men to France’s aid, but reinforcements were soon provided by men from the home-defence Territorial Force who volunteered for ‘imperial service’ abroad. Lord Kitchener’s August 1914 appeal for 100,000 new volunteers quickly brought in many times that number, but it would take a year to train, equip and arm them. Like the other combatant nations, Britain had only expected a short war.

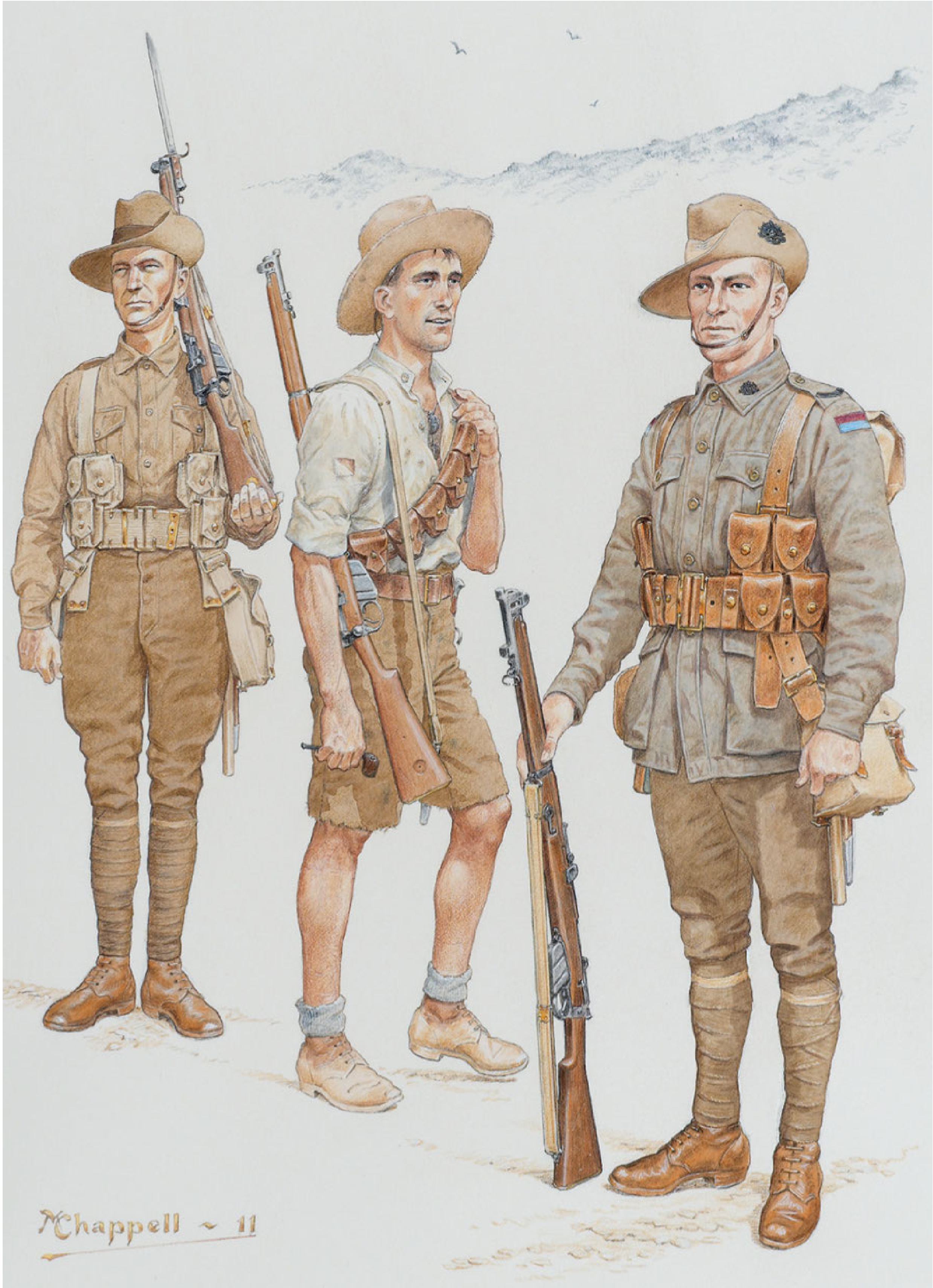
While too small to avoid being driven into retreat in 1914, Britain’s highly trained army was of excellent quality. The lessons of the Boer War had produced high standards of marksmanship and ‘fieldcraft’, and even cavalry troopers (centre) carried the same rifle as infantrymen, to fight dismounted. German officers whose men were mown down in 1914 by the rapid fire of the stubborn British Expeditionary Force called them ‘incomparable soldiers’– but by summer 1915 most of them had fallen. While traditional ‘tribal’ differences were cherished, as by Scottish units (left), the BEF wore practical 1902 khaki woollen uniforms (right), differentiated only by regimental cap badges and shoulder-strap titles. The integrated 1908 Mills equipment set, woven from cotton ‘webbing’, carried 150 cartridges.

IMPERIAL SERVICE

Badge worn by members of the Territorial Force and the Yeomanry who had volunteered for overseas service.

AUSTRALIAN TROOPS, GALLIPOLI

1915


MChappell - 11

Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 478: The Australian Army in World War I, by Robert Fleming.

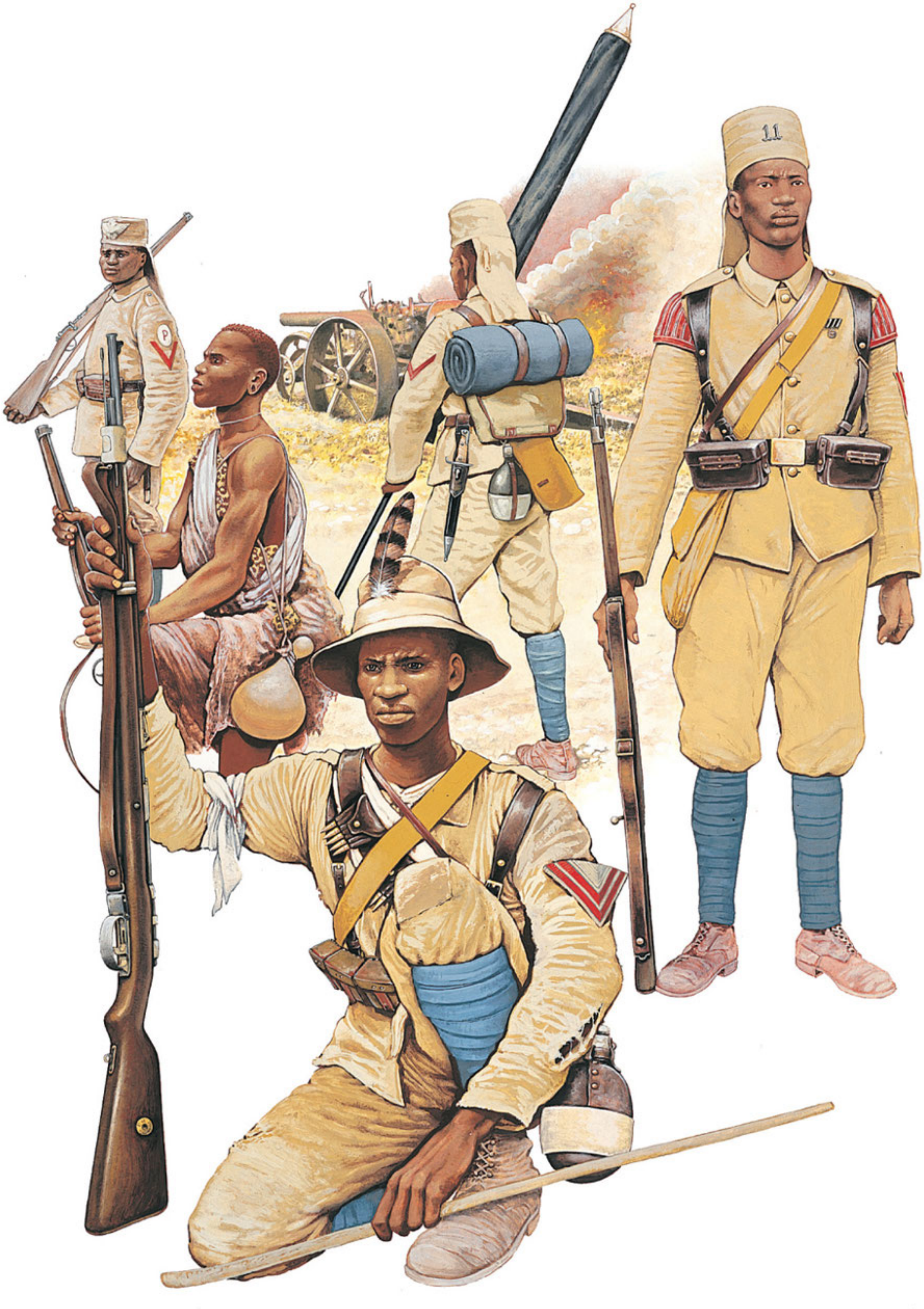
In 1914 the young, self-governing nation of Australia had a total population smaller than today's London or New York, yet in 1914–18 nearly 332,000 Australian volunteers would serve overseas, of whom 61,500 were killed and 148,500 wounded. In the Middle East and on the Western Front these rugged colonial pioneers demonstrated unflagging aggression and ingenuity in battle, coupled with a sturdily egalitarian attitude to petty discipline.

Their first grim experience of war became a defining icon of Australian national identity: Gallipoli – the disastrous Allied landing in April 1915 in southern Turkey. The difficulties, and the defenders, were seriously underestimated, and the beachhead was locked in a terribly costly stalemate before withdrawal in January 1916. By that time the ANZACs (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) had suffered some 11,430 killed, alongside about 9,800 French, 1,360 Indian troops, and 34,000 British.

In 1915 the slouch hat made famous by the 'Diggers' was worn with a looser-cut variant of the British tunic which tended to fade to grey (right), with coloured battalion shoulder-flashes. In the scorching summer trenches men wore whatever they liked (centre); the weapons were British, but kangaroo-leather equipment sometimes replaced webbing (right).

GERMAN SCHUTZTRUPPE, EAST AFRICA

1914–15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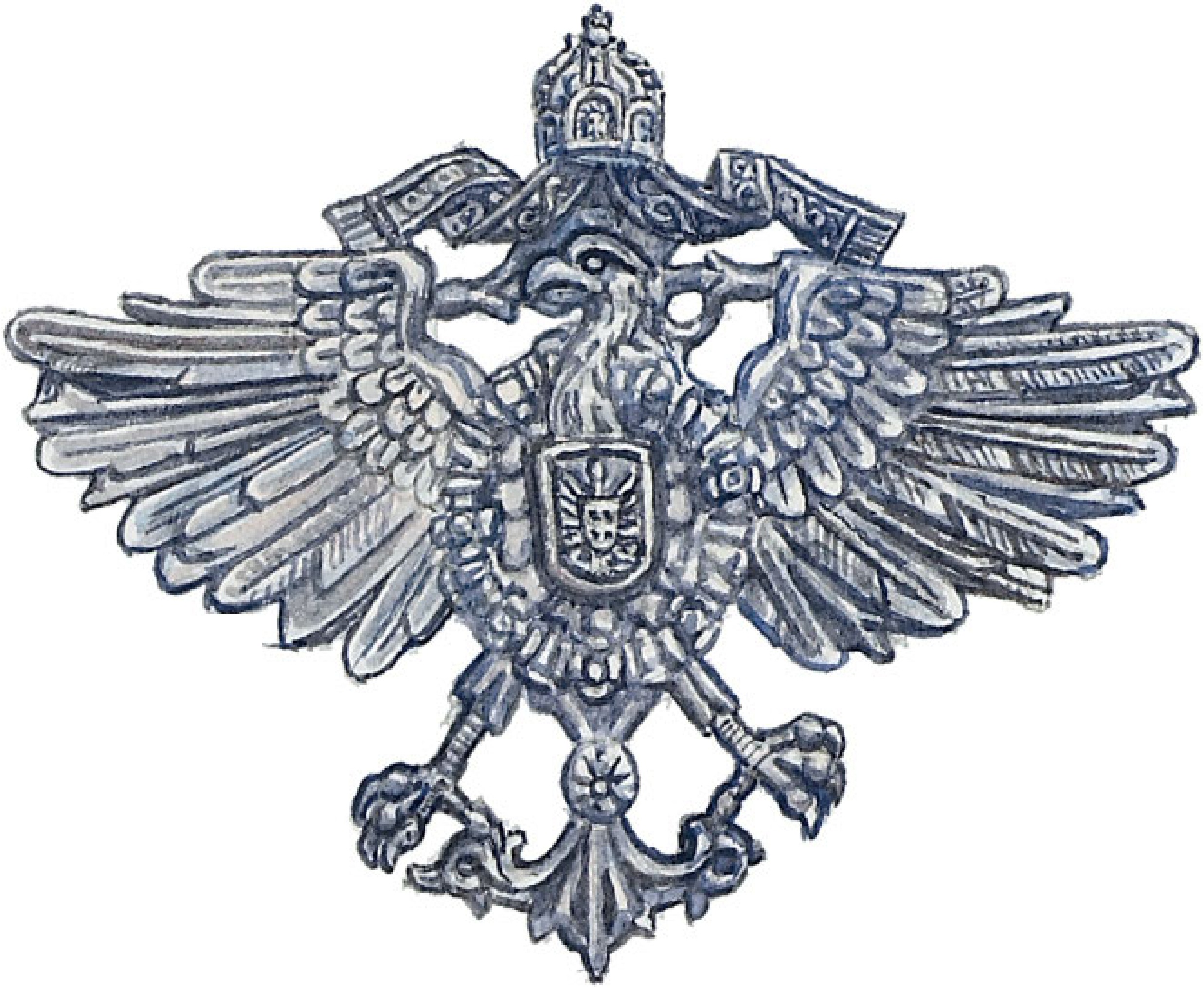
Artwork by Raffaele Ruggeri, from MAA 379: Armies in East Africa 1914–18, by Peter Abbott.

Germany had only begun acquiring overseas colonies in the 1880s, and in 1914 German East Africa (roughly, today’s Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) was garrisoned by just 2,400 African askaris of the ‘Protection Troops’ and Police, with 300 German officers and senior NCOs. However, they were commanded by the energetic Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, who – although virtually cut off from reinforcement or resupply – was determined to tie down as many Allied troops as possible. Expanding his force by local recruitment to some 3,000 Europeans and 12,000 Africans by early 1916, he conducted a brilliant hit-and-run mobile campaign. Although hunted by up to 20 times that number of South African, British, Belgian and Portuguese troops, when he finally surrendered in November 1918 he still had 1,500 men under arms.

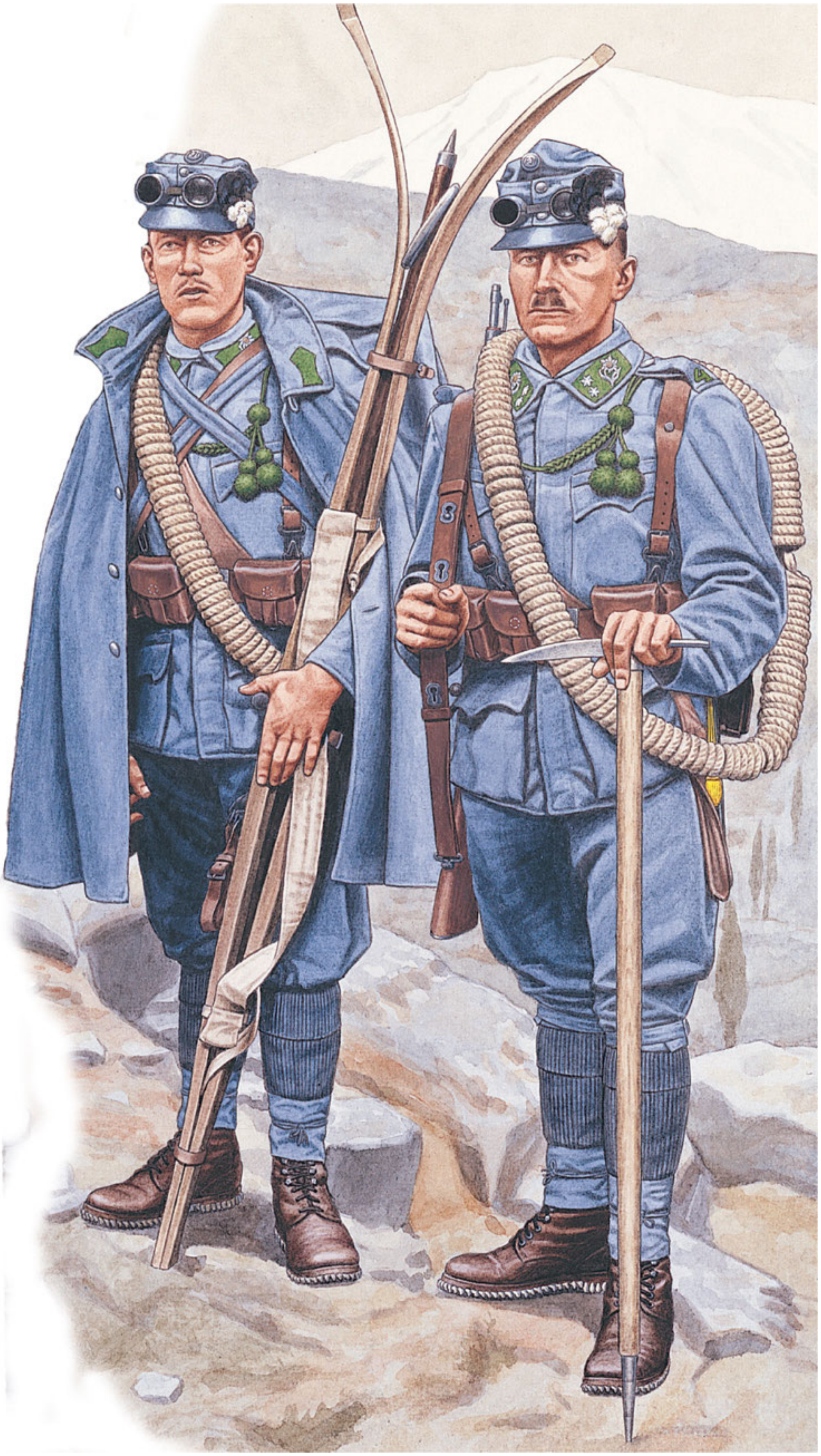
Germany dressed its African troops in light khaki cotton uniforms, with a version of the Muslim tarbush ‘fez’ cap traditional in the region, and some German additions such as NCOs’ chevrons (foreground), and ‘swallows-nest’ shoulder ornaments for musicians; equipment and rifles were mostly of obsolete German patterns (right). However, during the campaign Lettow-Vorbeck’s troops became very ragged, using whatever clothing they could find.



Tarbush badge used by African askaris in Togo, Cameroon, and East Africa. Artwork by Stephen Walsh, from MAA 490: Imperial German Colonial and Overseas Troops 1885–1918, by Alejandro de Quesada and Chris Dale.

AUSTRIAN MOUNTAIN TROOPS

1915



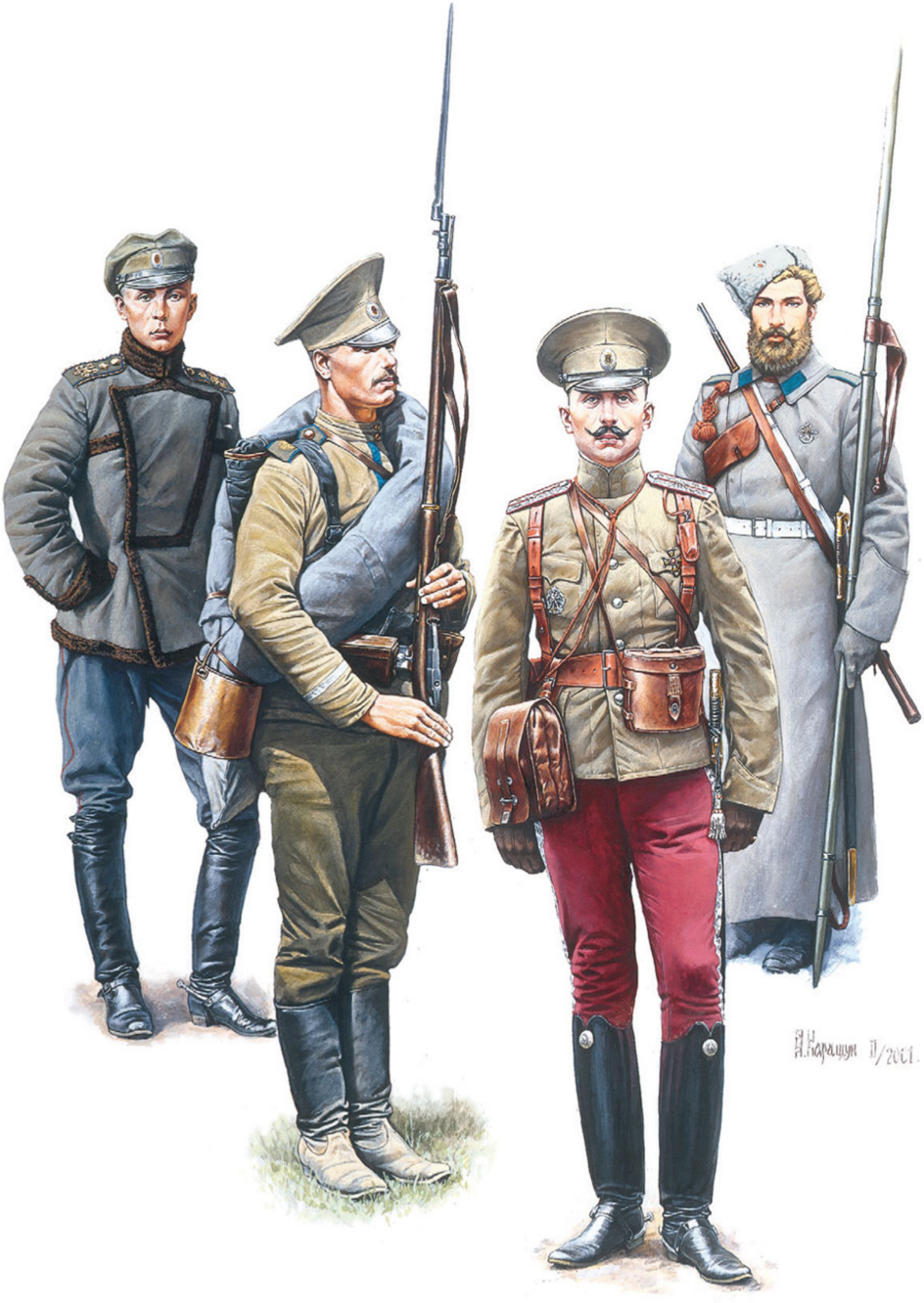
Artwork by Darko Pavlovic, from MAA 392: The Austro-Hungarian Forces in World War I (1), by Peter Jung.

The Imperial and Royal Army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was organized as the Common Army, and a separate Territorial Force (Landwehr, Honvéd) theoretically for home defence; in fact the latter provided about one third of the field army's divisions before the 1914 mobilization.

The mountain troops deployed by several Continental armies were specially trained and equipped to operate in the conditions of Alpine warfare – always challenging, and lethal in winter. In 1914 the Austro-Hungarian army had 5 mountain brigades, but 31 by spring 1916. Italy's entry into the war on the Allied side in May 1915 opened a new and hard-fought Alpine front in the Tyrol, where Austrian volunteers were used to form units of Landeschützen (Territorial Riflemen). The private and corporal illustrated here, equipped as a ski-scout and a climbing leader, wear standard Austrian 1908 'pike-grey' forage caps and uniforms, but with mountain goggles, trousers, stockings, cleated boots, and (left) a short, loose overcoat that could be worn over equipment. The blackcock feathers in the caps, and green collar patches and marksmanship lanyards, identify mountain troops, and the Edelweiss collar-patch badge is the Tyrolean insignia.

RUSSIAN GUARDS TROOPS

1914–16

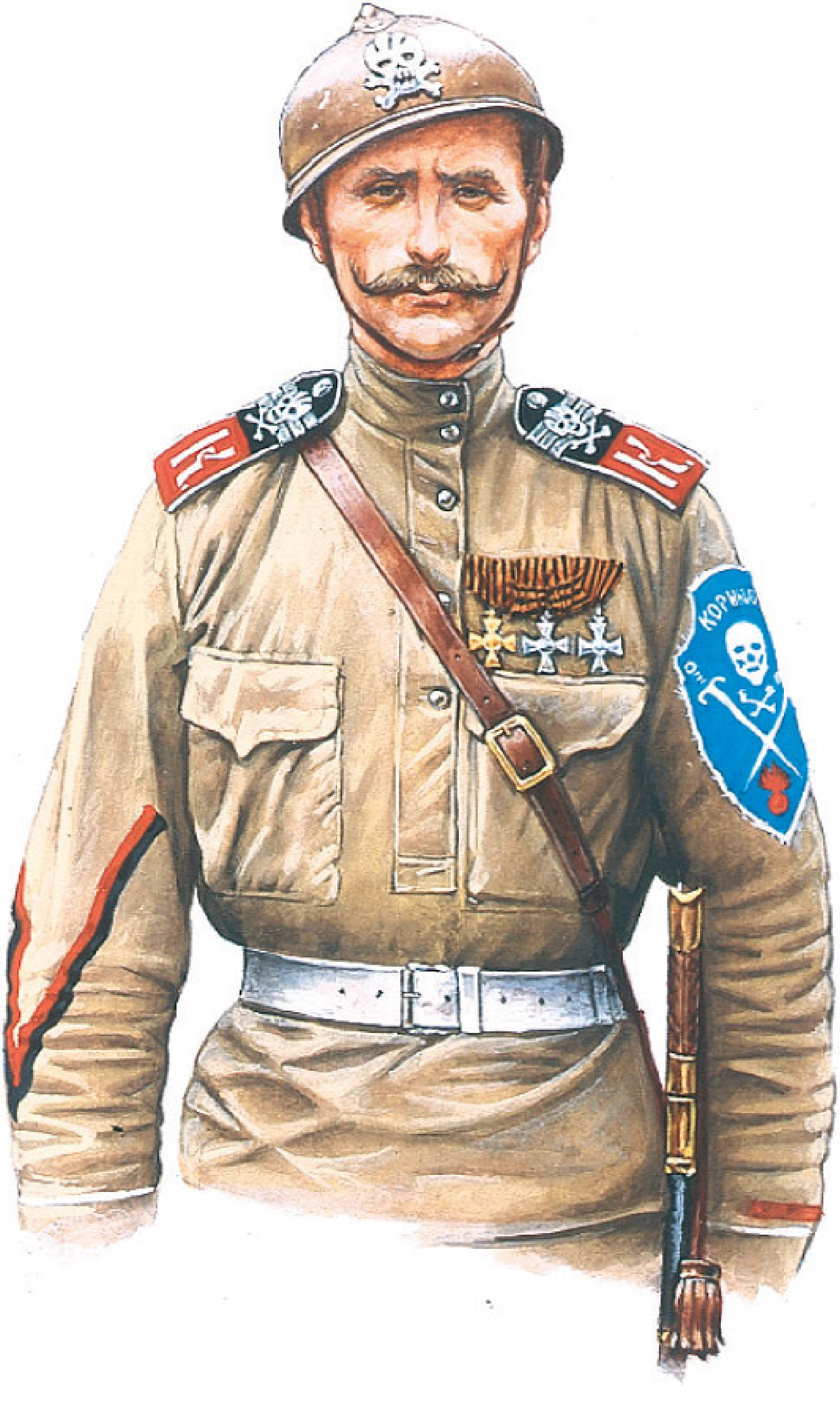

А.Каращук II/2001.

Artwork by Andrei Karachtchouk, from MAA 364: The Russian Army 1914–18, by Nik Cornish.

In August 1914 Imperial Russia’s huge but badly supplied conscript armies invaded both East Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and were badly defeated by the Germans. However, despite shocking casualties and outdated logistics, they were often successful against the Austrians during see-sawing campaigns over discontinuous 1,700-mile fronts in 1915.

The five elite Guards divisions incorporated units of all arms including Cossacks (right). The cavalry (left, and second right) sported traditional uniform features, such as lancer jackets and crimson hussar breeches. The infantry guardsman (second left) wears a notably smart version of the army’s khaki 1907 field uniform, with unit-coloured distinctions largely concealed. The peaked cap, gymnastiorka pullover field shirt, breeches and high boots were standard, but dispersed manufacture and unreliable resupply produced wide variations. Over the belt equipment and knapsack the grey-brown greatcoat is carried in a roll, its ends tucked into the messtin. Two pouches hold 60 rounds for the 1891 Moisin-Nagant 7.62mm rifle; the bayonet was usually carried fixed.

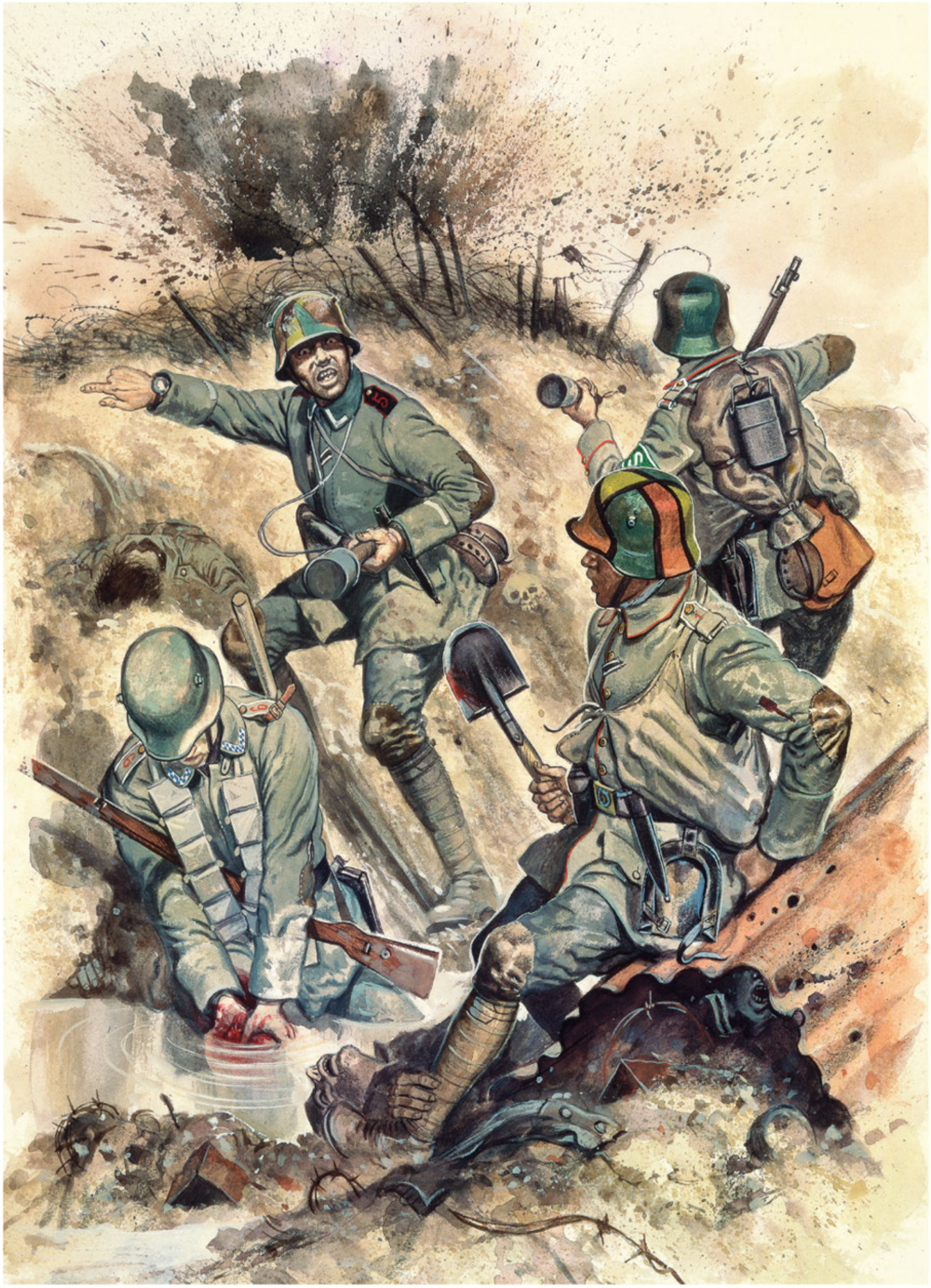
The Guards infantry suffered heavy losses in General Brusilov’s summer 1916 offensive, and elements in Petrograd took part in the first revolution in March 1917.


КОРНИЛ

NCO, 1st (Kornilov's) Shock Regt, 1917.

GERMAN ASSAULT TROOPS

1916–17



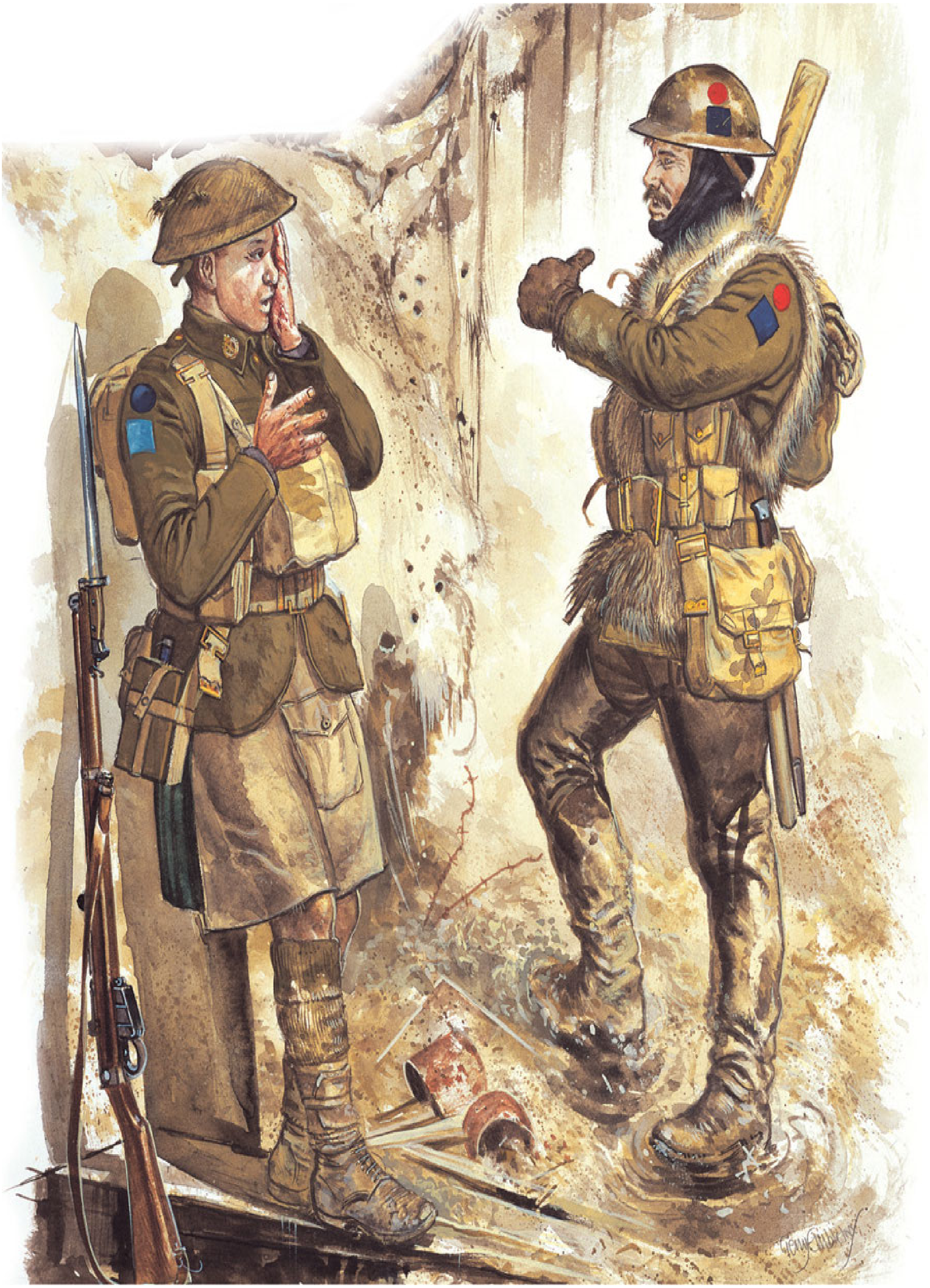
Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 80: The German Army 1914–18, by D S V Fosten and R J Marrion.

In 1916 both sides tried to break the stalemate of trench warfare on the Western Front by launching major offensives after huge, days-long preparatory artillery bombardments, including the use of poison gas. Despite casualties in the hundreds of thousands at Verdun and on the Somme, these achieved only limited gains, and the Germans began experimenting with special 'assault battalions'. Equipped with their own support weapons – portable machine guns, flamethrowers, mortars and light cannon – these Sturmtruppe made surprise attacks on short sectors, to cut through and dislocate the Allied defences by shock impact.

By now Germany was being starved by an Allied naval blockade, and the soldiers' gear was simplified not only to meet battlefield conditions but also for economy. From 1915 steel helmets were issued to protect against air-burst shrapnel shells; but the field uniform became much plainer, and cheap puttees replaced high boots. For short-range attacks equipment was lightened to the basics: a groundsheet, messtin, water-bottle, and haversack with emergency rations (right), plus cloth bandoliers of extra ammunition clips (left). For raids and assaults men now carried improvised bags of 'stick' hand grenades, and even sharpened entrenching-tools for use as hatchets in hand-to-hand fighting (right).

CANADIAN INFANTRY

1916–18

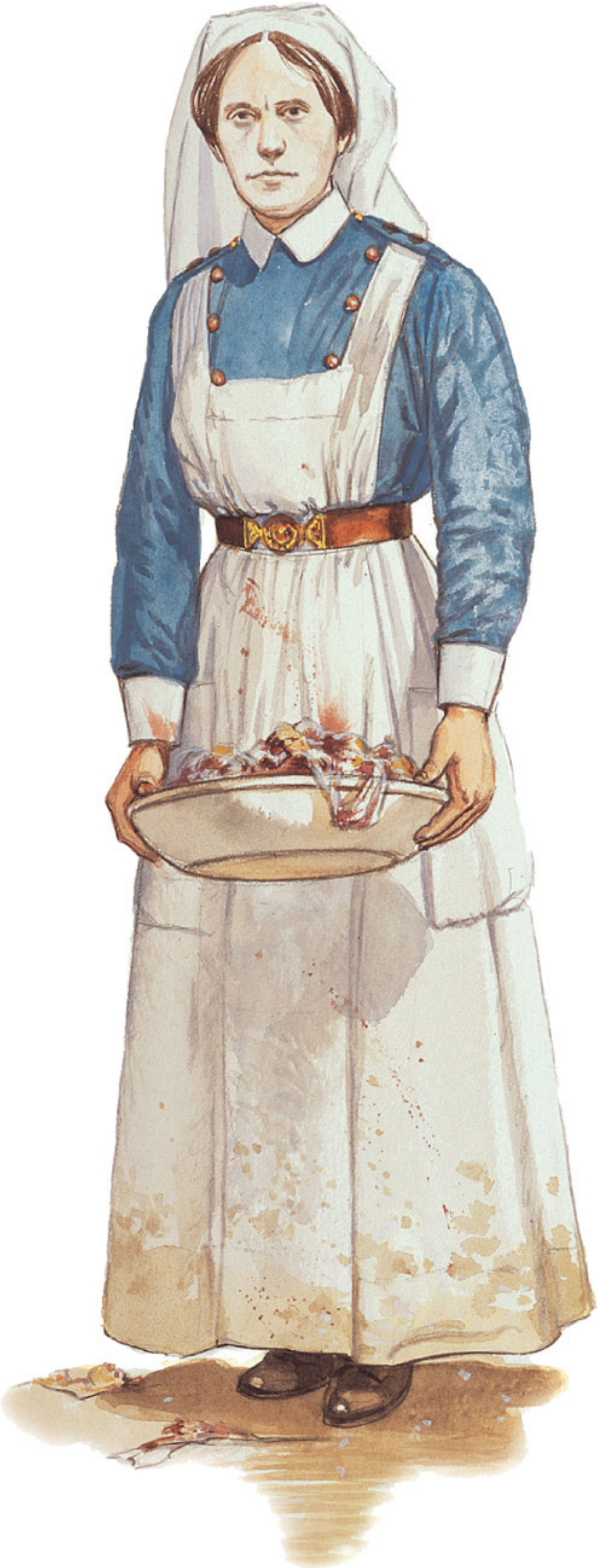


Artwork by Gerry Embleton, from MAA 439: The Canadian Corps in World War I, by René Chartrand.

Like Australia, Canada was a self-governing Dominion within the British Empire with a population of less than 8 million, and Canada, too, loyally ‘answered the call’. About 436,350 Canadians and Newfoundlanders served overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Corps (before mid 1917, all of them volunteers); of these, 66,655 were killed or listed as missing. The success of the four-division Canadian Corps was exemplified by their outstanding victory at Vimy Ridge in April 1917.

By 1916 early differences in rifles and equipment had given way to standard British issue, including doublets and kilts for Scottish units (left), universal ‘shrapnel helmets’, and goatskin jerkins and rubber waders in the winter trenches (right). The inconspicuous uniform of 1914 had proved too anonymous: units on a crowded battlefield needed to be quickly distinguishable, and in 1916 complex systems of coloured patches were introduced for battalions within brigades and divisions.

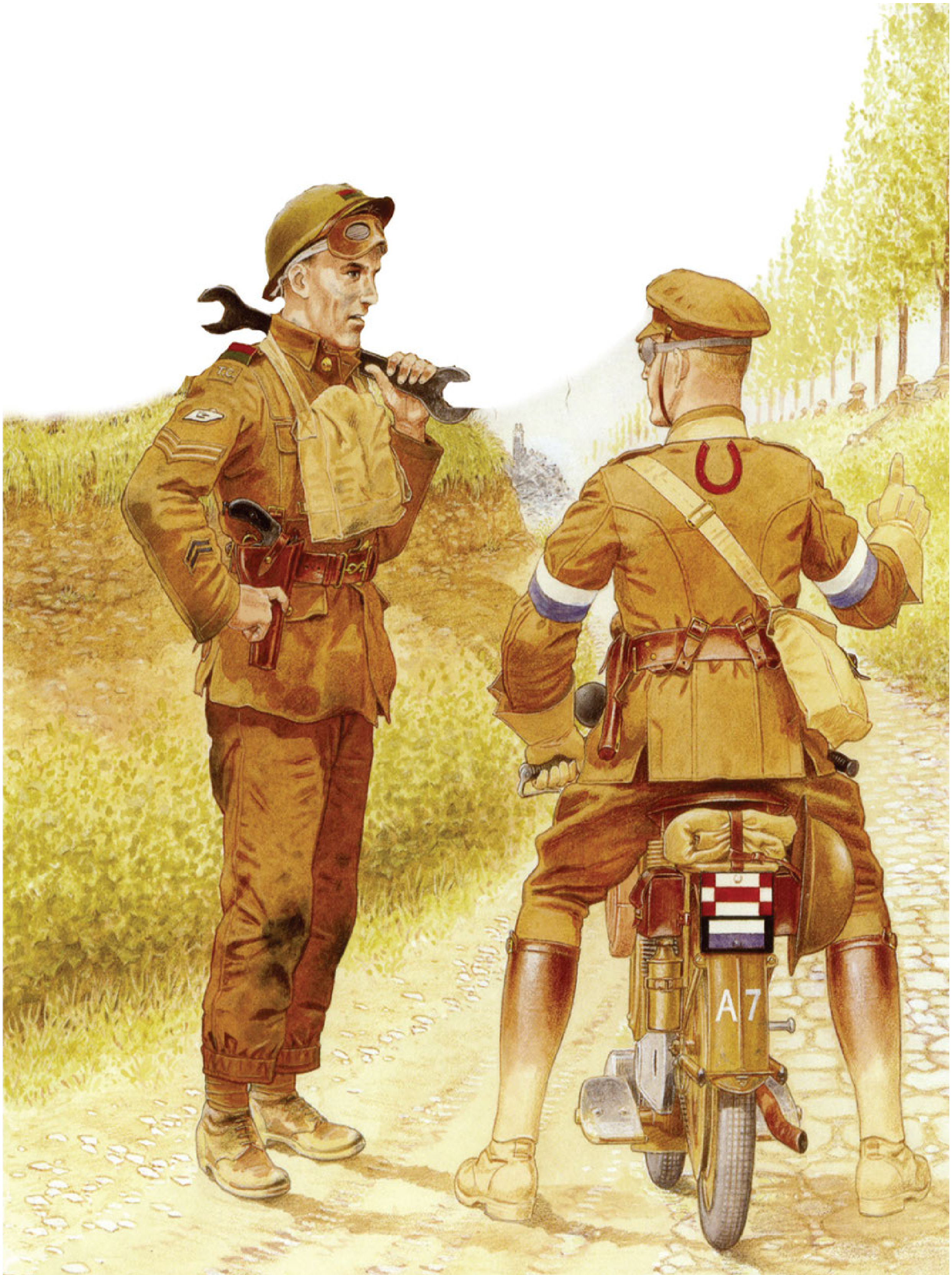
Here, an ‘old sweat’ of the French-Canadian 22nd Battalion, CEF – the famous ‘Van-doos’ (right) – is rallying a shell-deafened youngster of a Scottish-Canadian unit. The veteran’s upper patch identifies the senior battalion within the brigade by its disc shape, and the second brigade within the division by its colour; below this is the dark blue rectangle of 2nd Canadian Division.



Canadian Army Medical Corps nursing sister.

BRITISH TROOPS

1918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Artwork by Mike Chappell, from WAR 16: British Tommy 1914–18, by Martin Pegler.

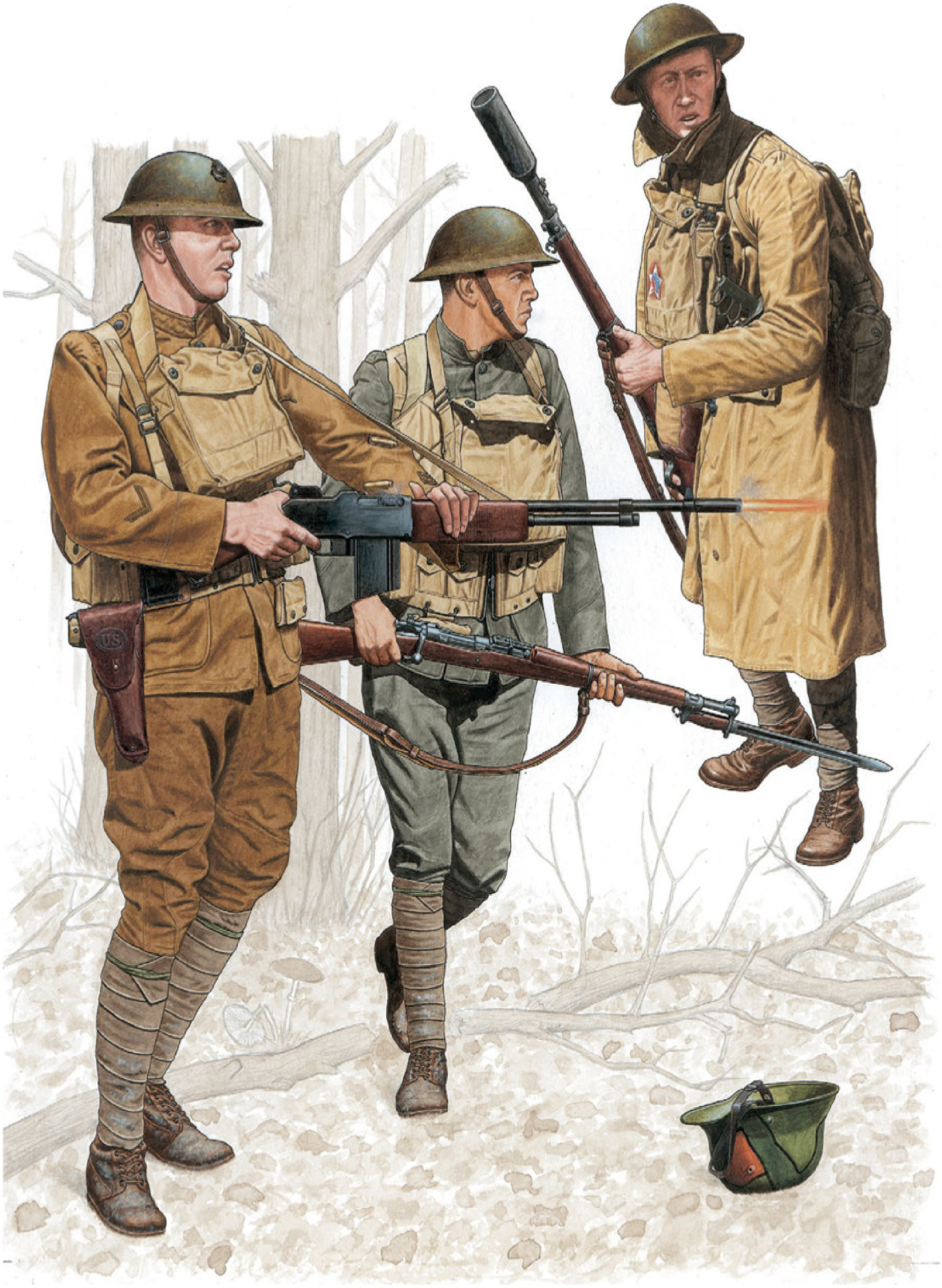
By mid 1918, at a cost approaching a million lives lost, the British Army had evolved into an expert organization capable of launching consistently successful offensives. The artillery had reached a peak of accuracy and skill. The reliability of tanks, first fielded in 1916 to break through barbed wire and silence enemy machine guns, had been steadily improved. Aircraft were not only observing, but taking a direct part in ground combat by strafing and bombing. Above all, staff officers had learned how to coordinate all these elements for mutual support in the attack.

These figures represent the new type of ‘technical’ soldier. The Tank Corps corporal (left) has an armoured face-mask under his helmet, a gasmask and a pistol-belt, and wears dirty mechanics overalls under his tunic. His battalion is identified by coloured flashes, his qualification as a tank crewman by his sleeve badge, and his two years’ overseas service by blue forearm chevrons.

Communications were speeded by motorcycle despatch riders (right); the blue-and-white brassards show he is on duty with a Royal Signals unit, so Army traffic police give him priority. He too has pistol equipment and a slung gasmask bag, plus goggles, gauntlets and leather leggings. His red horseshoe back-badge and the red-and-white checkered plate on his 1915 Triumph motorbike both identify 25th Division.

US MARINES, FRANCE

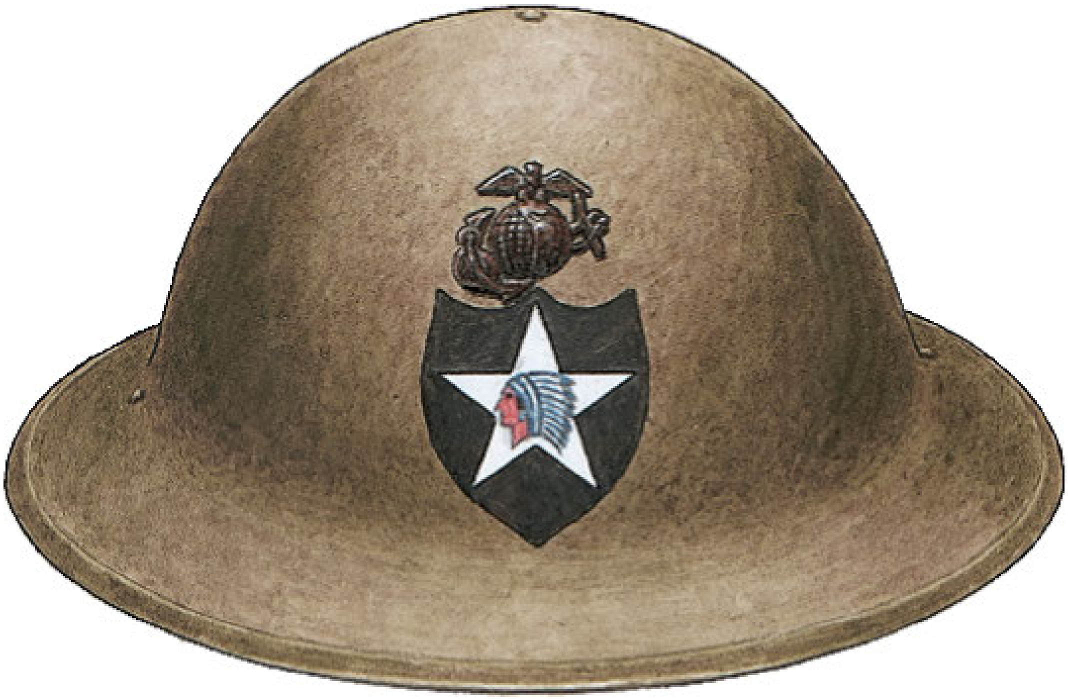
1918



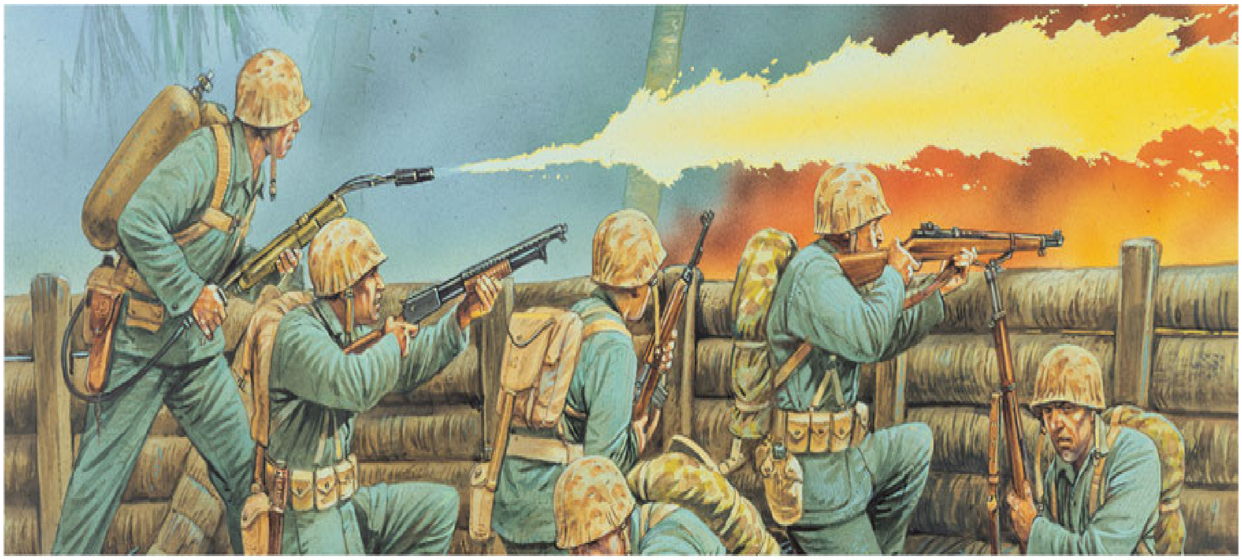
Artwork by Darko Pavlovic, from MAA 327: US Marine Corps in World War I 1917–18, by Mark R Henry.

Following the USA's entry into the war in April 1917 the Germans launched a major series of offensives from March 1918, hoping to achieve a decisive breakthrough before General Pershing's American Expeditionary Force (AEF) was ready for battle alongside the British and French. After the first assault troops achieved some startling advances, these attacks outran their artillery and supplies. By August the Allies were ready to launch a counter-offensive, which would roll forwards until the Germans sued for peace in November. The AEF 2nd Division, including a US Marine brigade, was among those that fought in the major battles of St Mihiel and the Argonne Forest.

The US Army had adopted khaki uniform (left) in 1912, but although this was standardized for the AEF in 1918 the USMC's distinctive 'forest-green' 1917 version (centre) was still to be seen. The US 1910 web gear, 1903 Springfield .30cal bolt-action rifle and 1911 A1 .45cal pistol were standard, but for its first major overseas war the US Army relied upon the Allies for much equipment. Here, the helmets and gasmasks are British, and the VB rifle-grenade discharger (right) is French. The excellent 1918 Browning Automatic Rifle (left) was only delivered in small quantities; imaginatively, its special magazine-pouch belt incorporated a metal cup to brace the butt when firing from the hip.

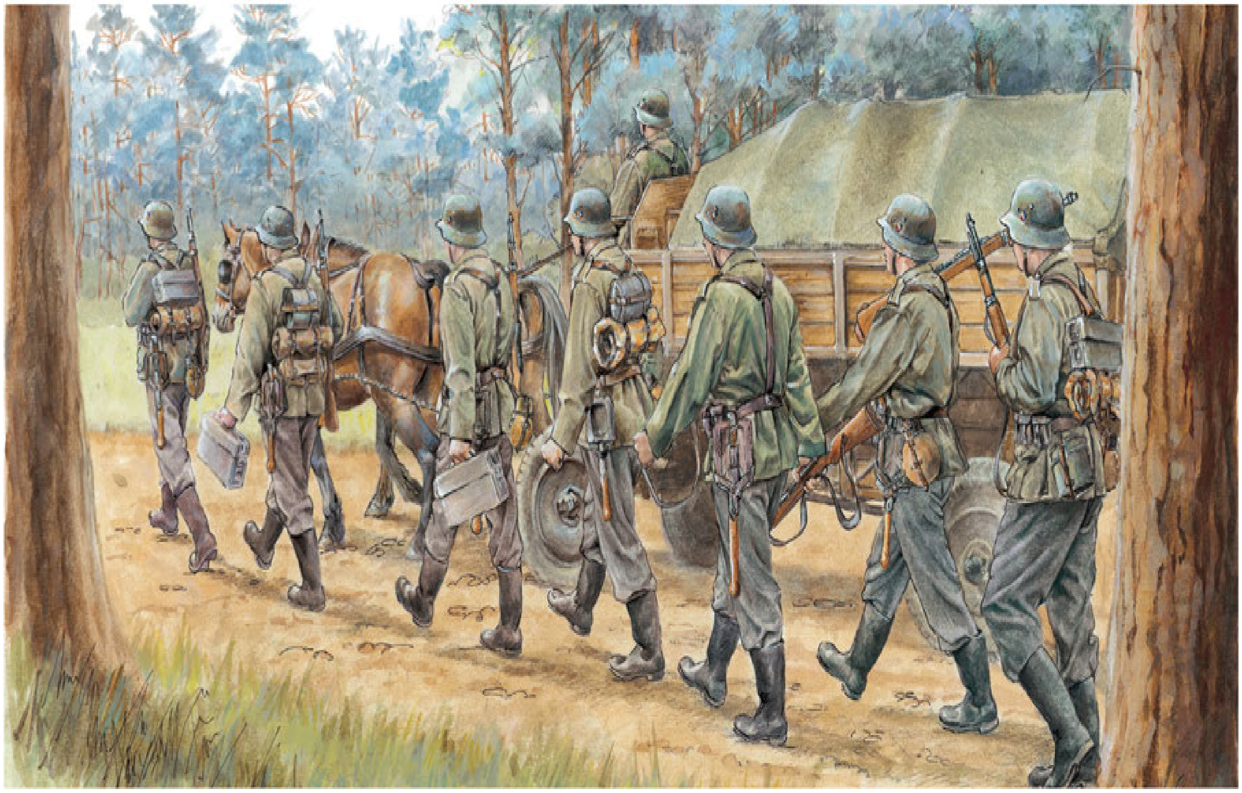


Helmet with 2nd Division HQ marking and US Marine badge, as worn on victory parades in the USA, 1919.



WORLD WAR II

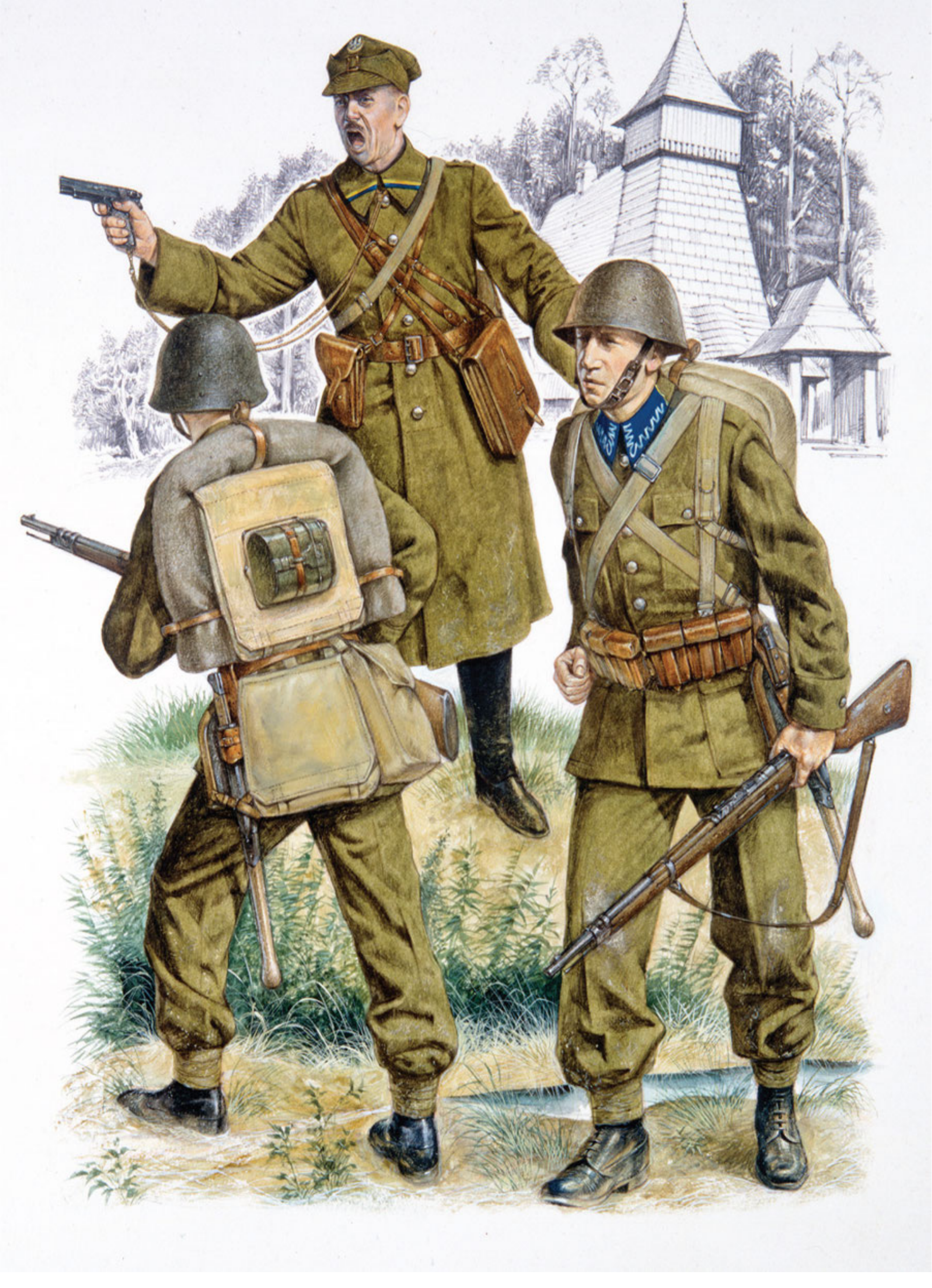
1939–1945



Artwork by Peter Dennis, from ELI 160: World War II Infantry Assault Tactics, by Gordon L Rottman (top); and by Elizabeth Sharp, from WAR 76: German Infantryman (2): Eastern Front 1941–43, by David Westwood (bottom).

POLISH INFANTRY

1939



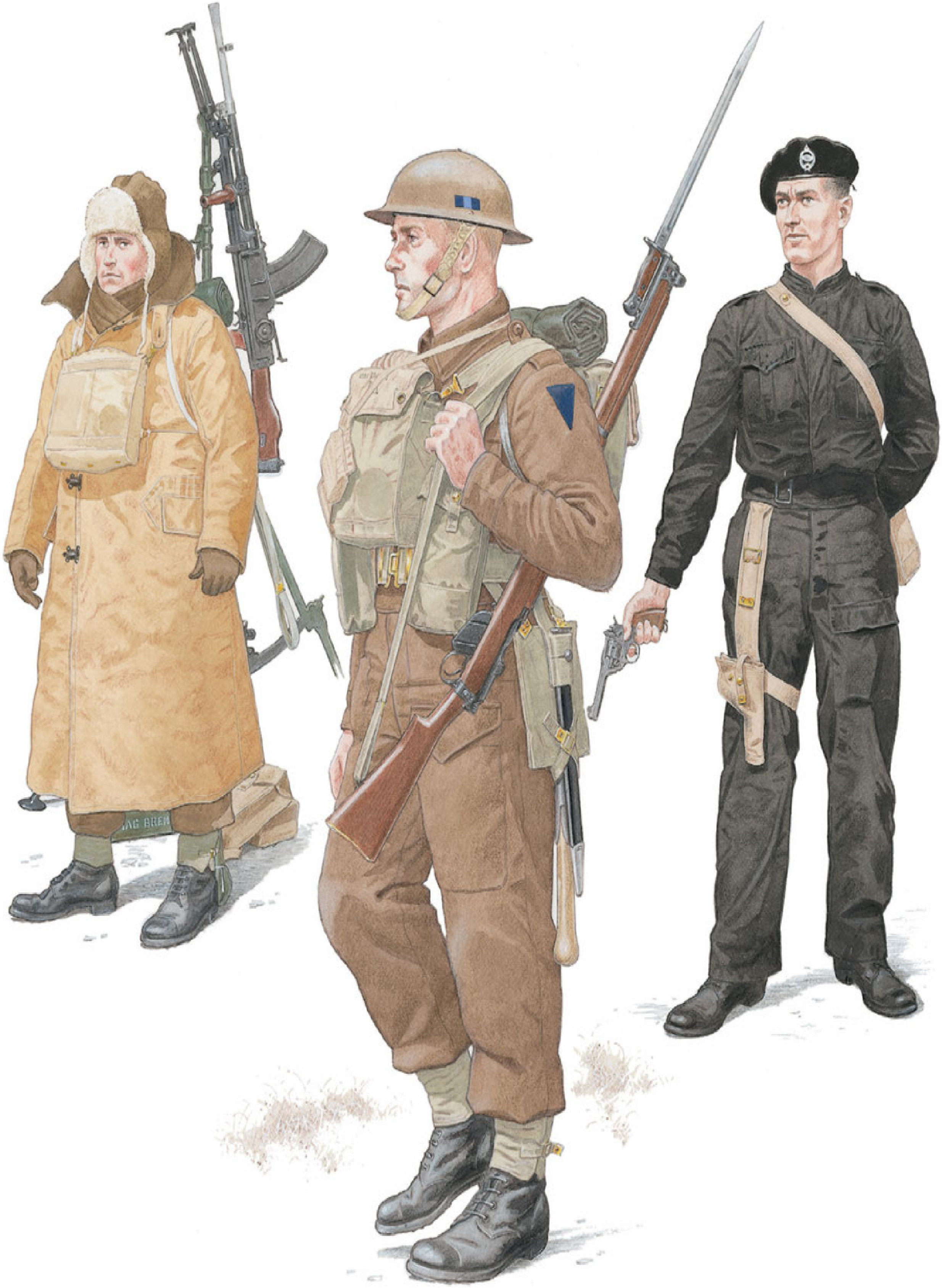
Artwork by Richard Hook, from MAA 117: The Polish Army 1939–45, by Steven J Zaloga.

Poland – partitioned between foreign powers in 1795 – was one of several nations that were reborn or created when the European empires were broken up in 1919. The new armies of these countries were based on various national military traditions. France had aided Poland's liberation struggle against the Russian Bolsheviks, so its influence was visible in the Polish army. This was doomed to be destroyed yet again in September 1939, while heroically resisting simultaneous invasions by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Polish uniform was an exemplar of the Continental European norms of the 1930s: a steel helmet; a four-pocket woollen tunic in a drab colour, but retaining more-or-less colourful arm-of-service/unit collar insignia (right); and trousers gathered by either puttees or short anklets. Integrated equipment was assembled around the belt and shoulder braces, supporting ammo pouches, bayonet scabbard, entrenching tool (right), and haversack; a knapsack with rolled greatcoat, blanket and groundsheet/tent section and messtins (left), and a gasmask satchel. Bolt-action rifles with 5–10 round integral magazines were mostly of or close to 7.92mm/.30in calibre. Poland's most noticeable national item was a rogatywka field cap with a traditonal square-cornered crown (centre).

BRITISH TROOPS

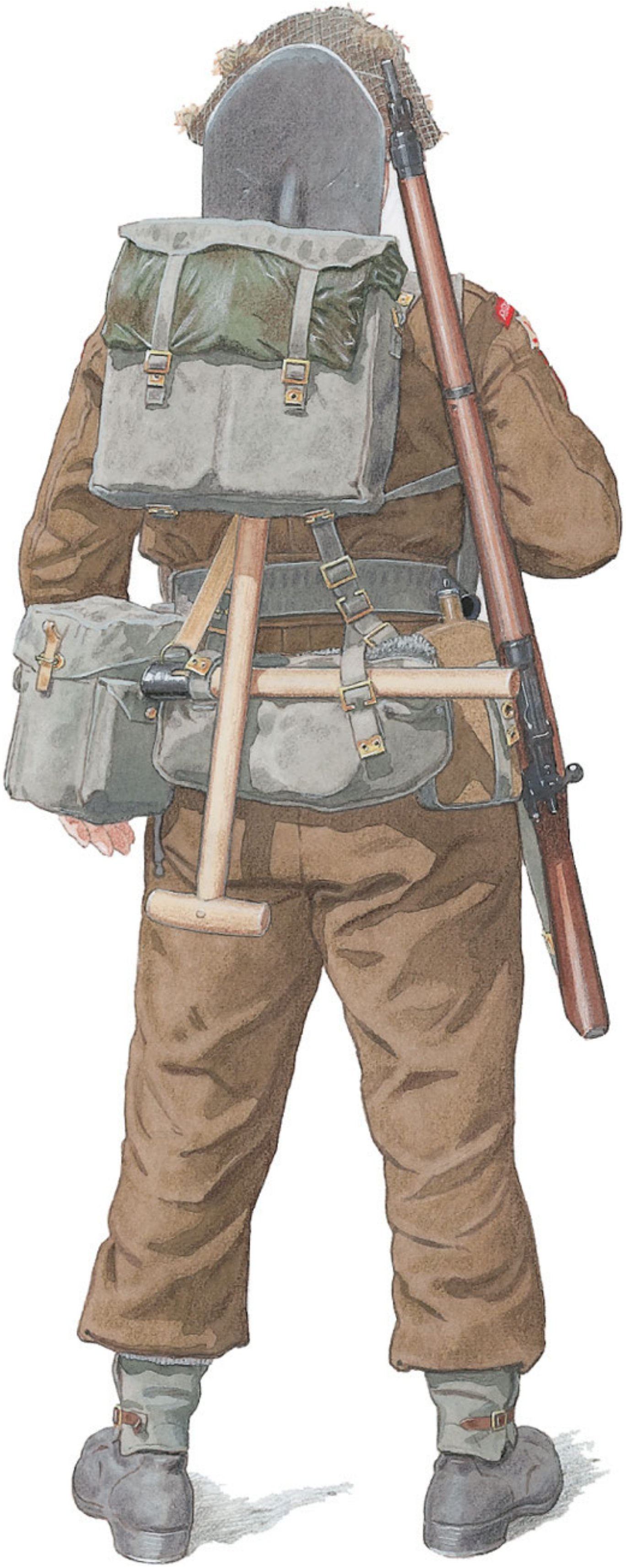
1940


MAG BREN

Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 354: The British Army 1939–45 (1), by Martin Brayley.

From 1937 the British Army introduced modernized uniforms and infantry equipment. The thigh-length tunic and semi-breeches worn with puttees were replaced with ‘battledress’ – a waist-length ‘blouse’, buttoning to loose trousers with pockets for specific items. The new webbing set reflected the fact that since about 1915 infantry small-unit tactics had been built around the firepower of a light machine gun. The ten pouches for rifle clips were replaced with two large ‘universal’ pouches, taking a mix of folded 50-round rifle bandoliers, magazines for the section’s Bren LMG (left), bombs for the platoon’s 2in mortar, and hand grenades. The haversack buckled either behind the shoulders as a ‘small pack’, or to the ends of shoulder-braces at the hip; these and the belt also supported the water-bottle, bayonet and entrenching tool, while the gasmask was slung on the chest ready for use.

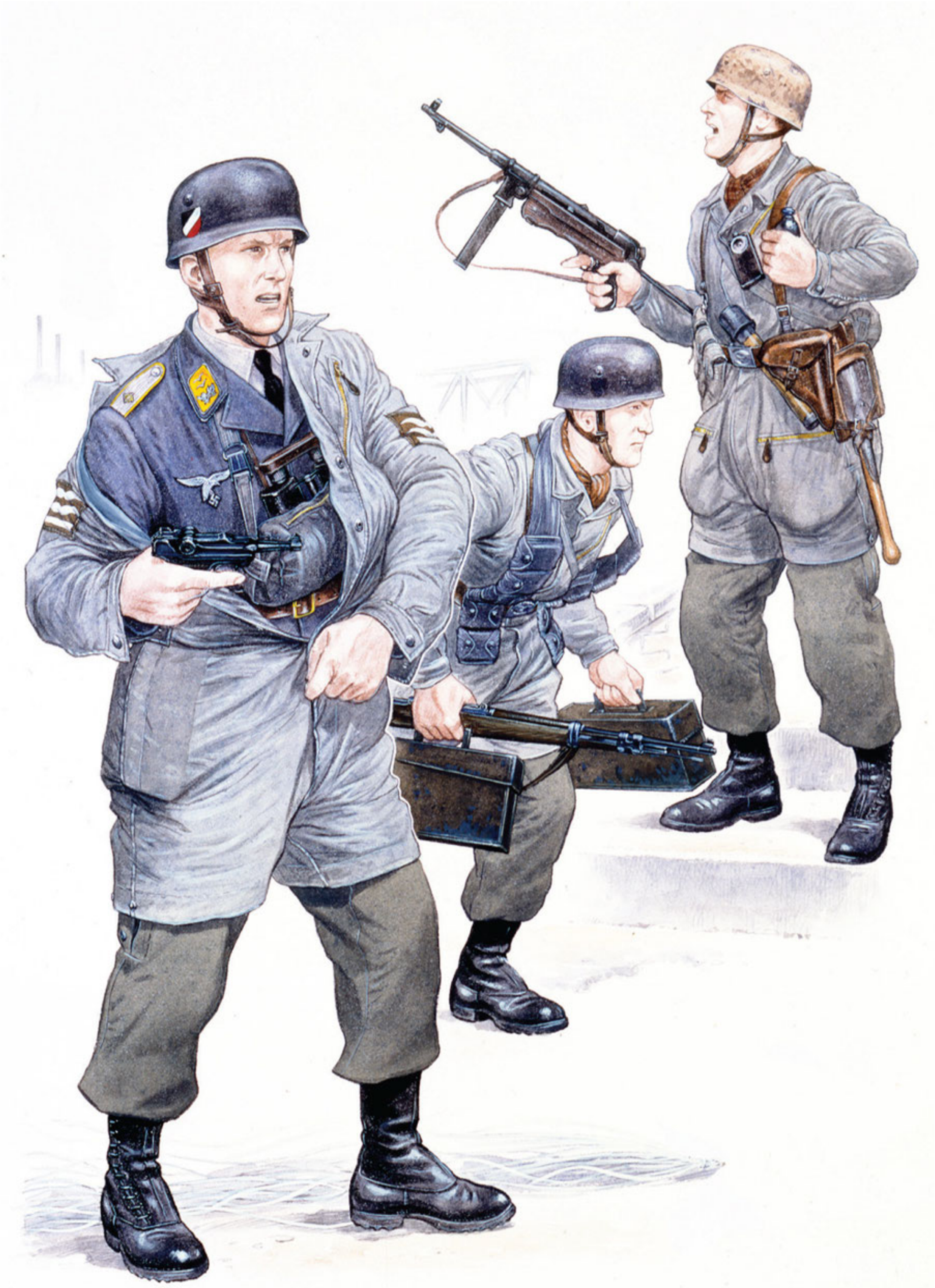
Some units of the BEF in France in 1939–40 revived the coloured 1916 ‘battle badges’ in simpler form (centre). The Royal Tank Regiment (right) had adopted a black beret and overalls, convenient in the cramped and oil-stained confines of a tank. Cold-weather gear was not provided, however; the ill-fated 1940 expedition to Norway (left) had to make do with heavy ‘watch-coats’, which were only suitable for static sentries.



Rear view of 1937 infantry equipment, as modified by 1944.

GERMAN AIR FORCE AIRBORNE TROOPS

1940



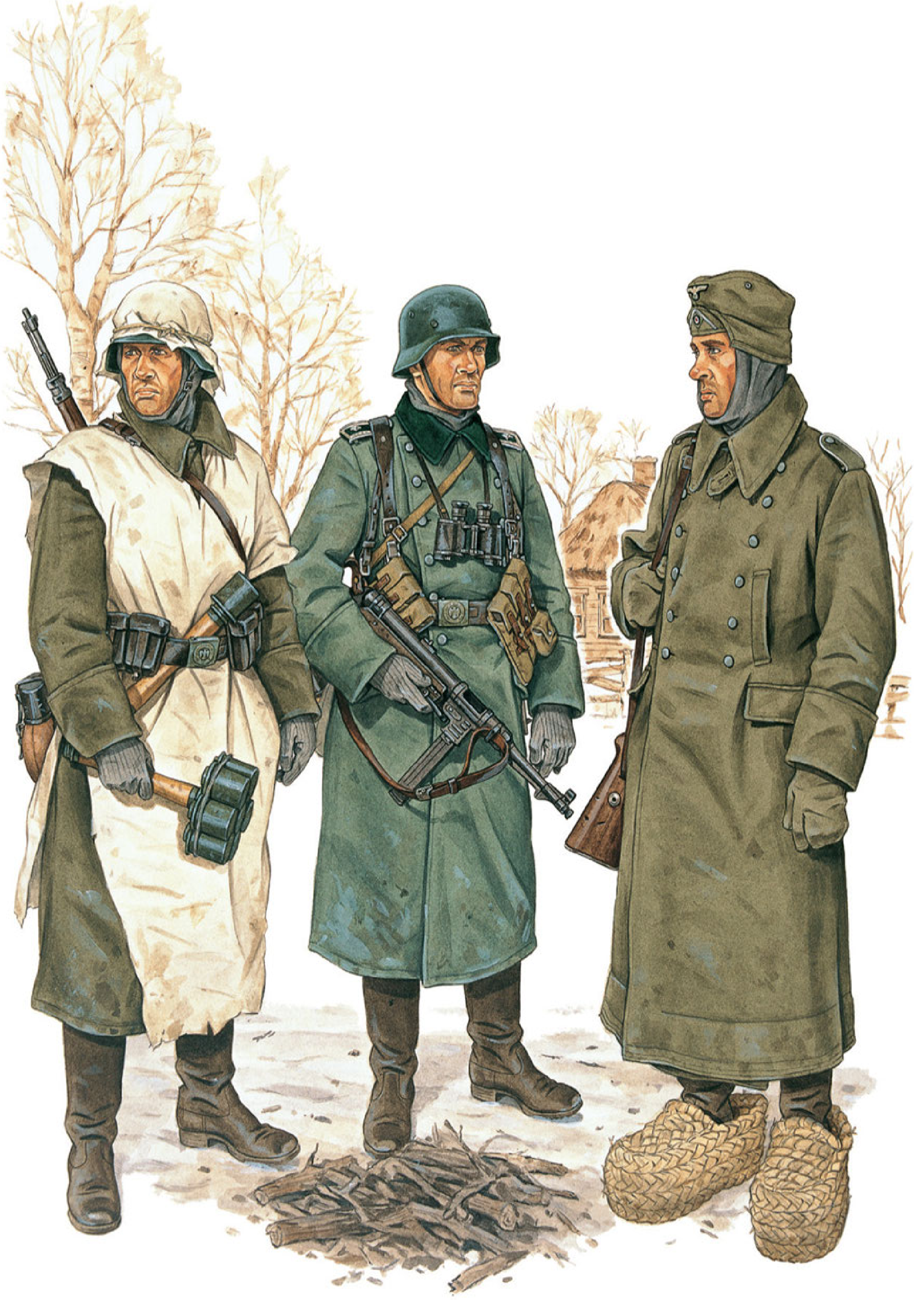
Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 139: German Airborne Troops 1939–45, by Bruce Quarrie.

The airborne insertion of troops behind enemy lines, in order to seize vital objectives ahead of a ground advance, was pioneered in combat – both for pinpoint raids, and larger-scale assault landings by parachute and glider – during the German Blitzkreig assaults of April–May 1940. A full divisional assault on Crete in May 1941 also suceeded, but at such cost that the Germans never repeated it. After smaller scale assaults, complete British and US airborne divisions, with their own light artillery and jeeps, made major landings in Normandy, the Netherlands and Germany, but the Allies often failed to reinforce or replace these lightly equipped units soon enough afterwards. Since World War II few combat drops have taken place, due to the great logistic demands and tactical difficulties of such operations.

To avoid paratroopers getting tangled in the rigging lines, or breaking legs on impact, typical uniform modifications were rimless helmets, capacious smocks worn over the combat equipment during the jump, and high boots to give ankle support. The length of rifles and LMGs made it difficult to carry them on the drop; the Allies tried various solutions, but German Fallschirmjäger could carry only pistols and folding-butt sub-machine guns, and had to find and retrieve the longer weapons dropped separately in containers.

GERMAN TROOPS, RUSSIA

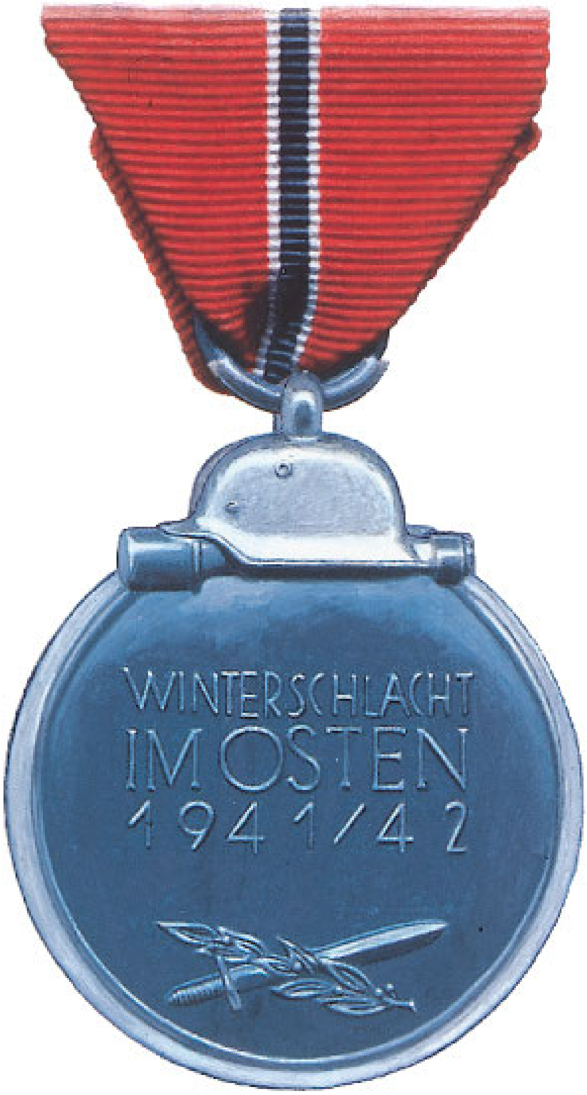
WINTER 1941/42



Artwork by Stephen Andrew, from MAA 326: The German Army 1939–45 (3), by Nigel Thomas.

The German Wehrmacht was well clothed, equipped and supported for short, mobile campaigns, but the rapid victories in the West in 1940 bred over-confidence – especially in Hitler himself, who thereafter disregarded the advice of his generals. The lightning advances and huge victories of encirclement achieved early in his invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 disguised the longer-term difficulties of sustaining campaigns over a vast, almost roadless country, in extremes of weather, against an army so numerous that it could survive suffering casualties in the millions. The German thrusts to capture Leningrad and Moscow failed in the autumn mud; winter found the stalled German armies ill-prepared in every way – and 340,000 men short of establishment, after suffering 750,000 casualties.

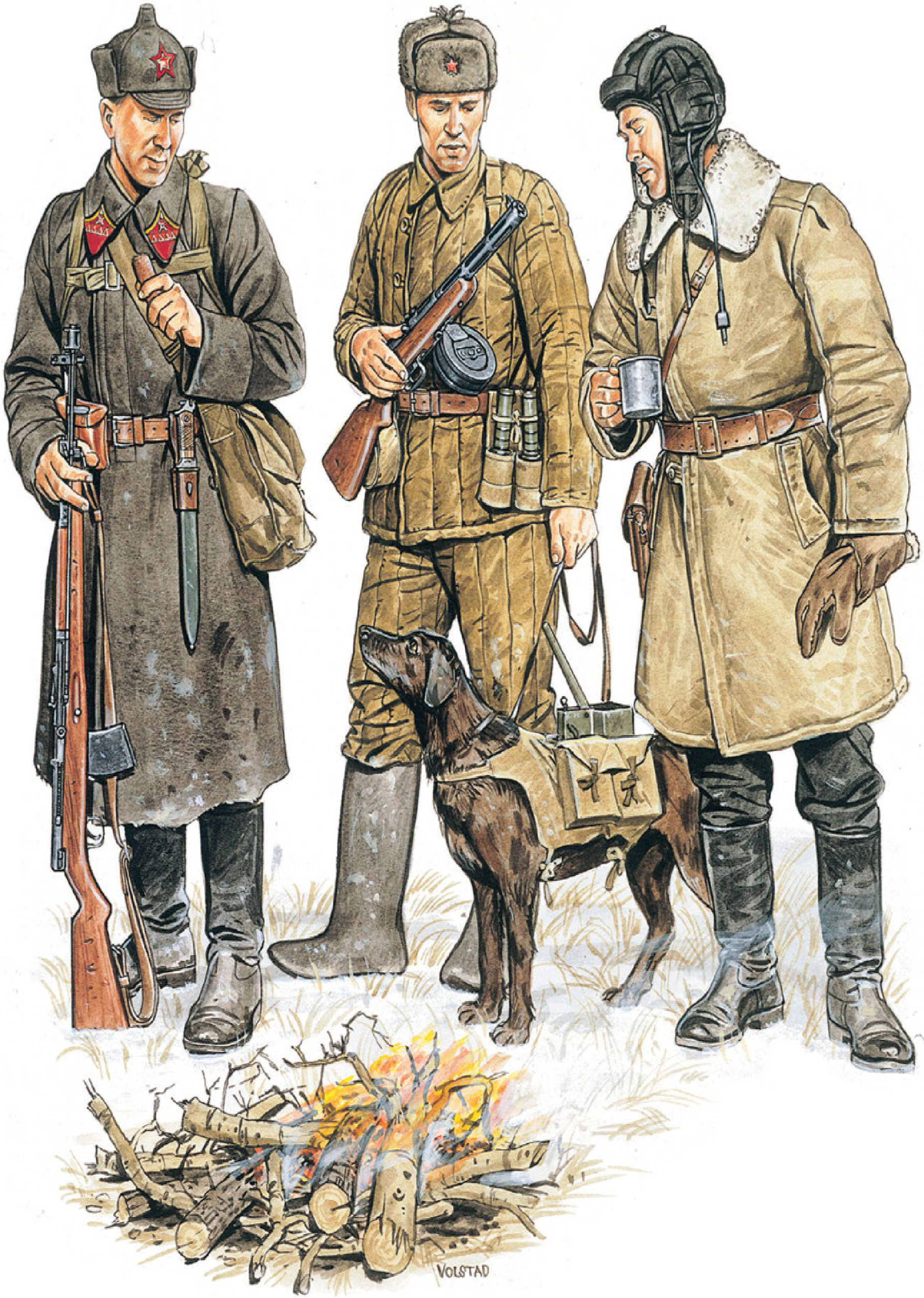
Only enough heavy watch-coats reached the front to equip individual sentries, who had to wear local straw over-boots (right) – even stuffing leather boots with wadding might not prevent frostbite. Sleeping bags were unknown, and in the freezing nights men had only their greatcoats (centre) and a blanket or two. No provision had been made for snow-camouflage garments, which had to be improvised from looted sheets (left). At -35oC the oil in unprotected rifles and machine guns froze, which might leave soldiers dependent upon grenades.


WINTERSCHLACHT
IM OSTEN
1941/42

The Eastern Winter 1941/42 Medal or 'Frozen Meat Order'. Artwork by Darko Pavlovic, from MAA 365: World War II German Battle Insignia, by Gordon Williamson.

SOVIET RED ARMY TROOPS

WINTER 1941/42


VOLSTAD

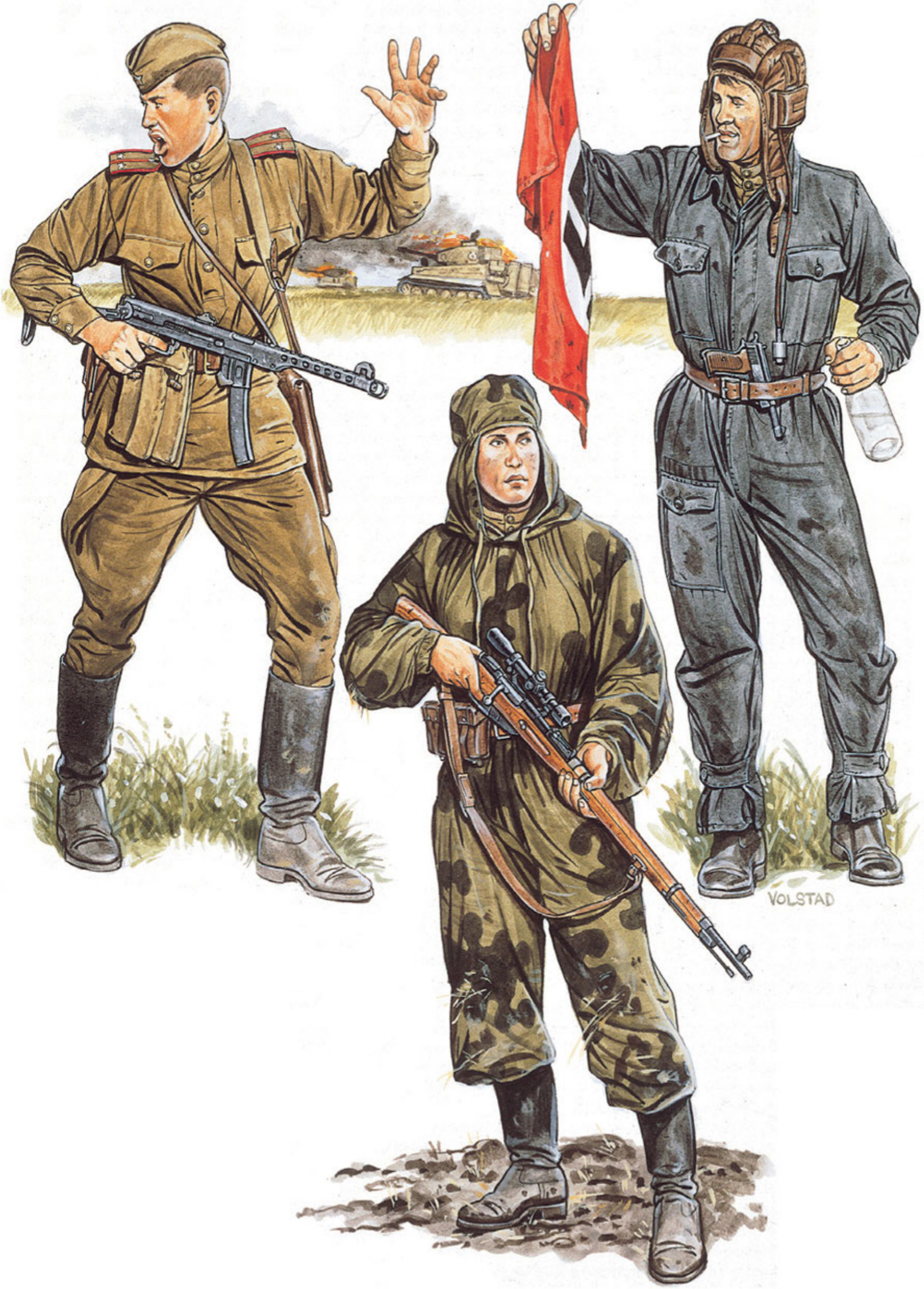
Artwork by Ronald Volstad, from MAA 216: The Red Army of the Great Patriotic War 1941–45, by Steven J Zaloga.

In June 1941 Stalin's Red Army was woefully unprepared to meet the German invasion. Murderous purges had robbed it of many of its best commanders, and left officers terrified of taking decisions without Communist Party sanction. The defences collapsed as the Panzer divisions slashed through them, surrounding huge numbers of troops to be mopped up later, and by November the Red Army had suffered 4 million casualties. However, they had halted the invaders outside Leningrad and Moscow; and Japan's inactivity in the east allowed General Zhukov to shore up the defence and make counter-attacks with reinforcements brought westwards from Siberia. Above all, the Red Army could count on the stoic courage of troops who were also better prepared for winter.

The standard uniform (left) of a budenovka cap and shinel greatcoat were supplemented (centre) with a fleece-lined, flapped ushanka; a quilted telogreika jacket, vatnie sharovari trousers, and big felt valenki boots, or a shuba sheepskin coat (right). Plentiful issue of the PPSh-41 sub-machine gun encouraged close-quarter fighting. One trick employed was to fit dogs with contact-detonated mines, and train them to run underneath advancing Panzers.

SOVIET RED ARMY TROOPS

SUMMER 1943


VOLSTAD

Artwork by Ronald Volstad, from MAA 216: The Red Army of the Great Patriotic War 1941–45, by Steven J Zaloga.

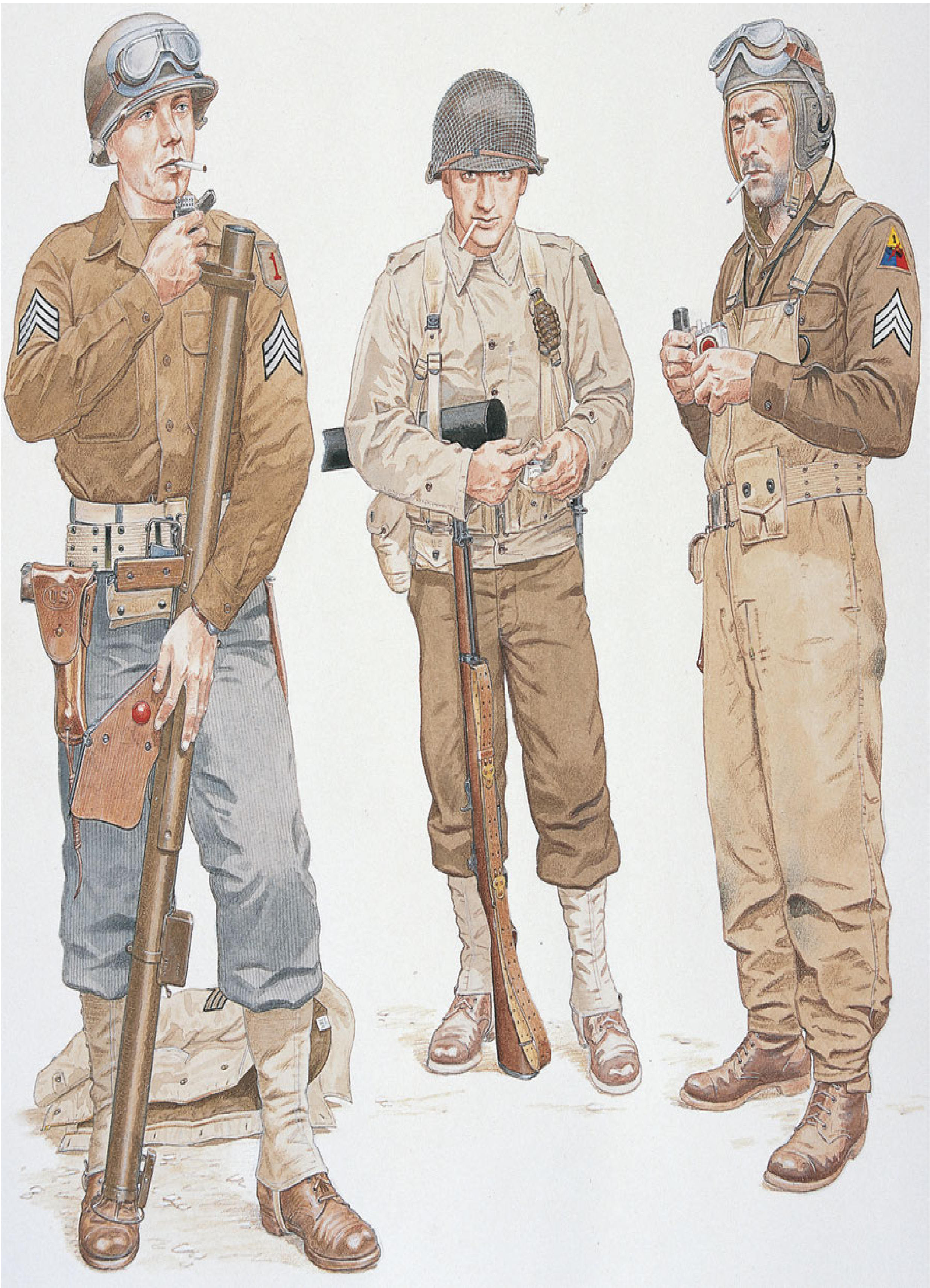
The annihilation of German Sixth Army at Stalingrad in winter 1942/43 marked one turning-point in the war, and the costly failure of Germany’s last great tank offensive at Kursk in July marked another. From then on the Wehrmacht would fight on the defensive, being pushed slowly but inexorably westwards by a Red Army intent on total victory. Stalin accepted that morale depended not on loyalty to the Communist dictatorship, but on a timeless appeal to defend ‘Mother Russia’, and in January 1943 uniform changes reflected this. Traditional rank titles were revived, with their insignia displayed on Tsarist-style pogoni shoulder-boards.

The summer uniform (left) was either a steel helmet or the khaki pilotka field cap; the field shirt, now with a standing collar, and with pockets and shoulder-boards for officers; and sharovari worn with either traditional high marching-boots or puttees and ankle-boots. Scouts, assault engineers and snipers – the latter including women – were issued with loose camouflage clothing in six colour variations of this ‘cloud’ pattern (centre). One foundation of the Red Army’s victories in 1943–45 was its superiority in tanks, particularly the excellent T-34; crews wore padded crash-helmets fitted with intercom earphones, and black or dark blue overalls (right).

The Gold Star medal, awarded to ‘Heroes of the Soviet Union’. Artwork by Christa Hook, from ELI 111: Heroes of the Soviet Union 1941–45, by Henry Sakaida.

US TROOPS, NORTH AFRICA

1942/43


US

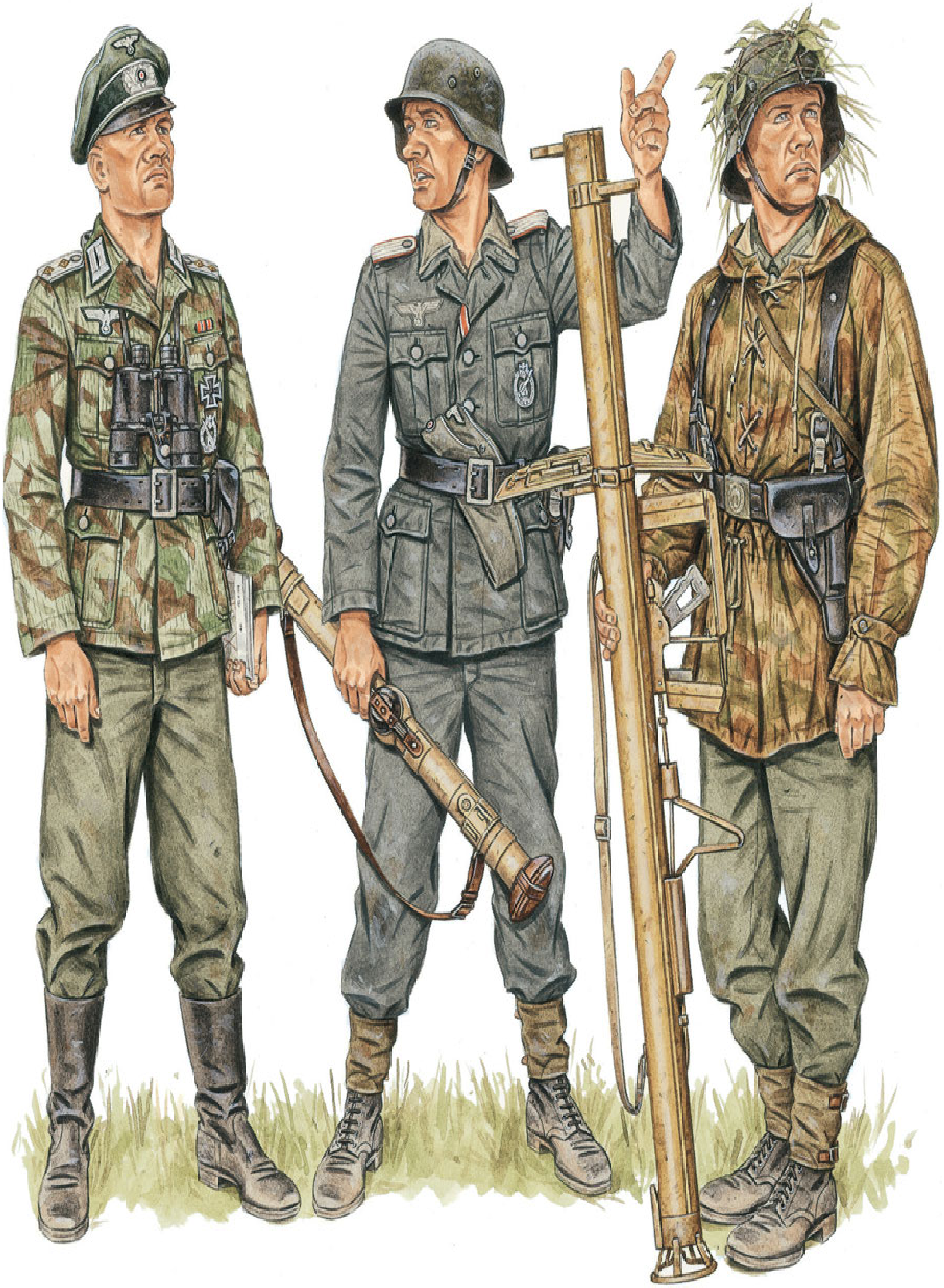
Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 347: The US Army in World War II (2), by Mark R Henry.

The US Army’s great innovation was to design separate everyday and combat clothing, while other armies still issued the same uniform for field and barracks dress. The ‘GI’, too, had a conventional wool service-dress tunic and trousers in brownish ‘olive drab’, but in 1941 an additional ‘Parsons’ jacket, of cotton duck lined with flannel, was introduced to replace the tunic in the field. It was worn, complete with divisional shoulder-patches and rank insignia, with the wool trousers, web leggings and boots, and web belt equipment little changed since World War I (centre). The new M1 helmet was also unique in having a steel outer shell that fitted over a light fibre ‘liner’ of the same shape, which could be worn alone when out of the line.

In the field the greenish herringbone twill (HBT) fatigue uniform was often worn over other garments for extra warmth and wind-resistance (left). This sergeant holds an early model of the 2.36in anti-tank rocket-launcher (‘bazooka’); weapons and vehicle crewmen carried a pistol instead of the heavy semi-automatic Garand rifle. In winter, tank crews received a warmly lined windcheater jacket – much coveted, since the Parsons jacket was too thin – and bib-front overtrousers (right). Their fibre and leather crash-helmet with a radio headset gave no ballistic protection.

GERMAN TROOPS, FRANCE

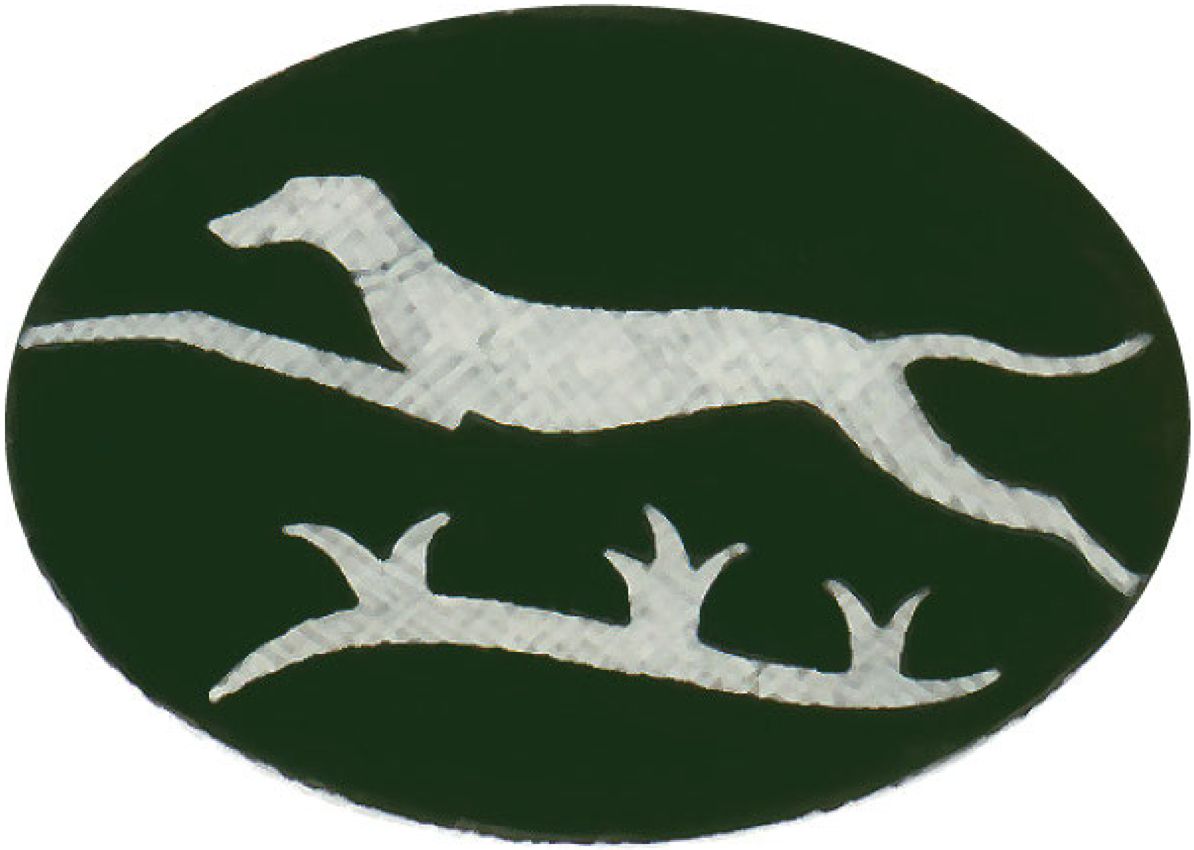
1944



Artwork by Stephen Andrew, from MAA 336: The German Army 1939–45 (5), by Nigel Thomas.

While the Germans continued to wear their wool uniforms as field dress – complete with collar Litzen, shoulder straps of rank and branch, a national badge on the right breast, and an ever-increasing range of decorations (centre) – they were also the first to make camouflage-printed garments general issue. Waffen-SS troops received smocks and helmet-covers from 1938, and from late 1942 the Army began issuing their own patterns; the Panzerschreck bazooka gunner (right) has a 1943 hooded model, reversible to white for winter. By this date wartime economies had long replaced the tall marching-boots with ankle-boots and web anklets copied from the British.

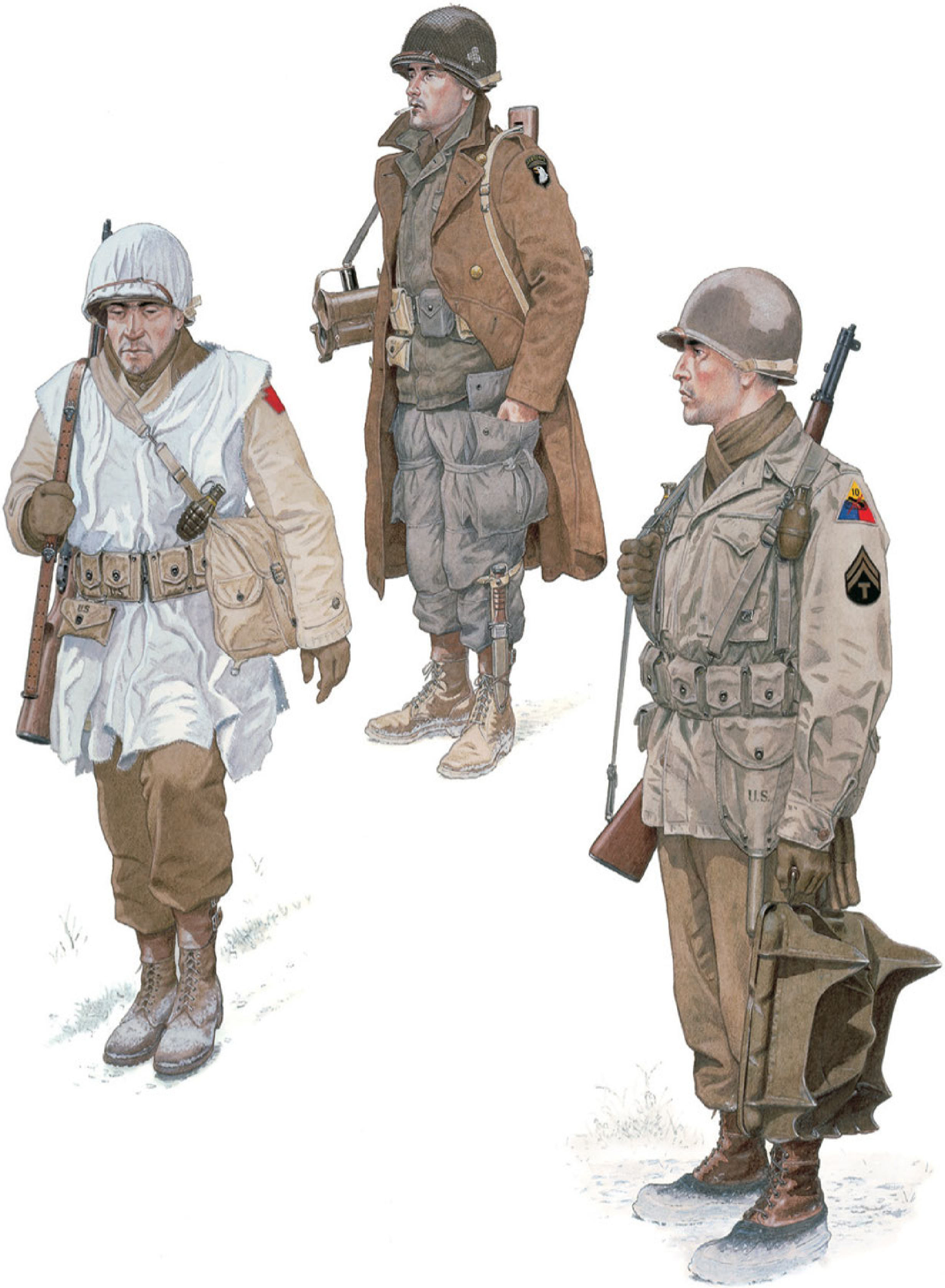
Many officers and senior NCOs acquired camouflage jackets privately tailored to their own preferences, using cloth from tent-sections (left), and this officer illustrates a surprising trend which is still popular in some armies today. Although the purpose of camouflage clothing is to conceal, for parade and walking-out dress some individuals (and in postwar armies, entire formations) combined its ‘front-line’ glamour with insignia, and even decorations, from their service uniforms. (See here for a modern example of this fashion.)



The ‘Windhund’ cap badge, worn by the 116. Panzer-Division. Artwork by Ramiro Bujeiro, from MAA 380: German Army Elite Units 1939–45, by Gordon Williamson.

US TROOPS, NORTH-WEST EUROPE

1944/45


US
U.S.

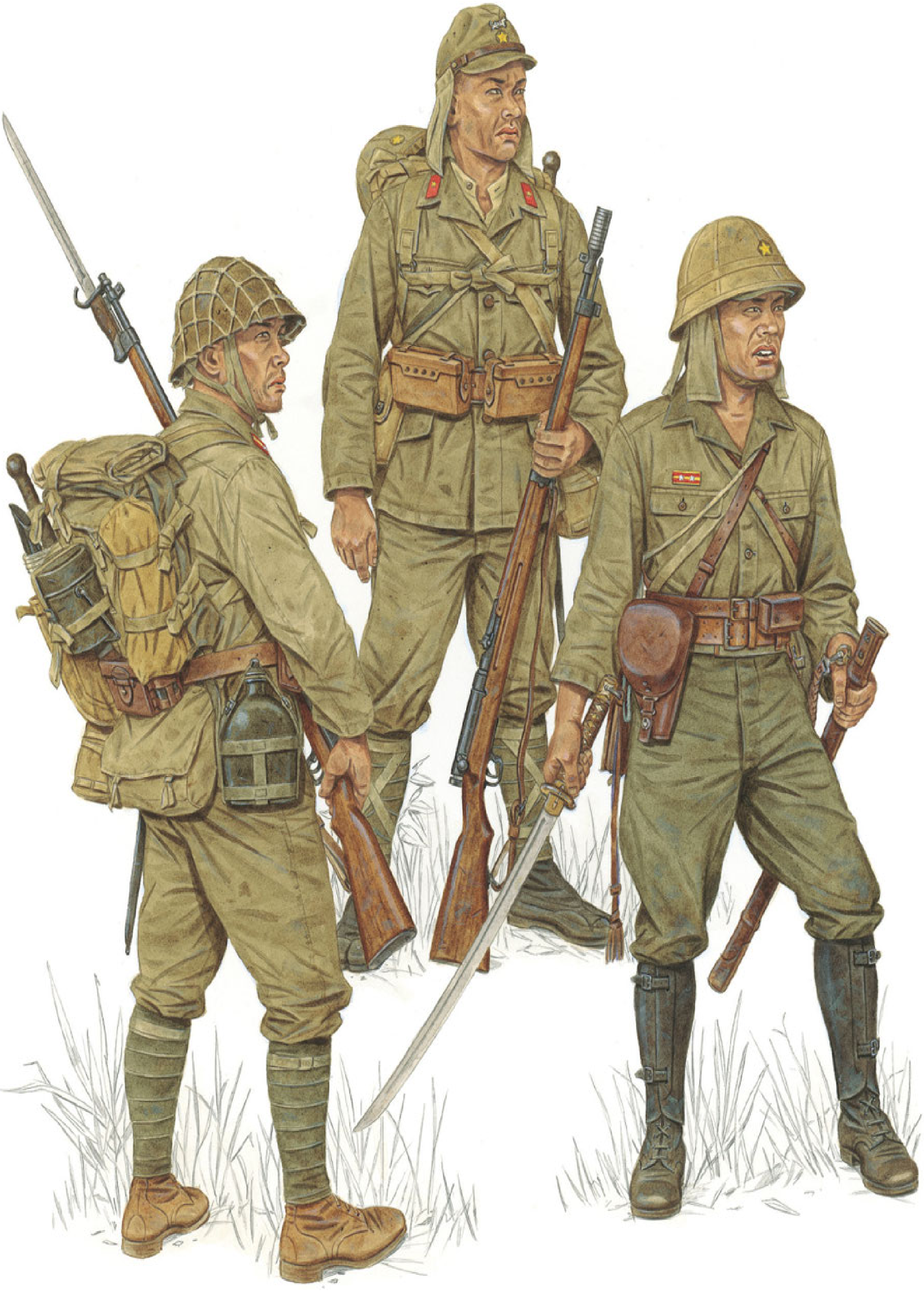
Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 350: The US Army in World War II (3), by Mark Henry.

The US Army continued to experiment with improved field uniforms, and in 1943 units in Italy tested a complete weather-resistant outfit to replace the unsatisfactory Parsons jacket. This 1943 field uniform reached North-West Europe in autumn 1944, and proved so successful that it would be copied by most postwar armies. The jacket (right) was longer and more generously cut than the 1941 type, with four big pockets and a button-on hood; it was supposed to be worn over a cold-weather pile 'liner', but this was seldom issued. Paratroopers were early recipients (centre); they modified the 1943 trousers by adding big leg cargo-pockets like those of their previous jump uniform, and after the war these became standard. This man has a late-model bazooka, which folded in two for easy carrying.

In the harsh winter 'Battle of the Bulge' hardly any US troops received special cold-weather gear, and most simply layered everything they had: long underwear, shirts, sweaters, wool trousers, field jackets, greatcoats, scarves, gloves, and often home made snow camouflage (left). At least the time-consuming high-laced web leggings had now been replaced with boots with an integral buckled ankle-flap, and some lucky troops also received waterproof winter 'shoepac' overboots (right).

JAPANESE TROOPS, BURMA

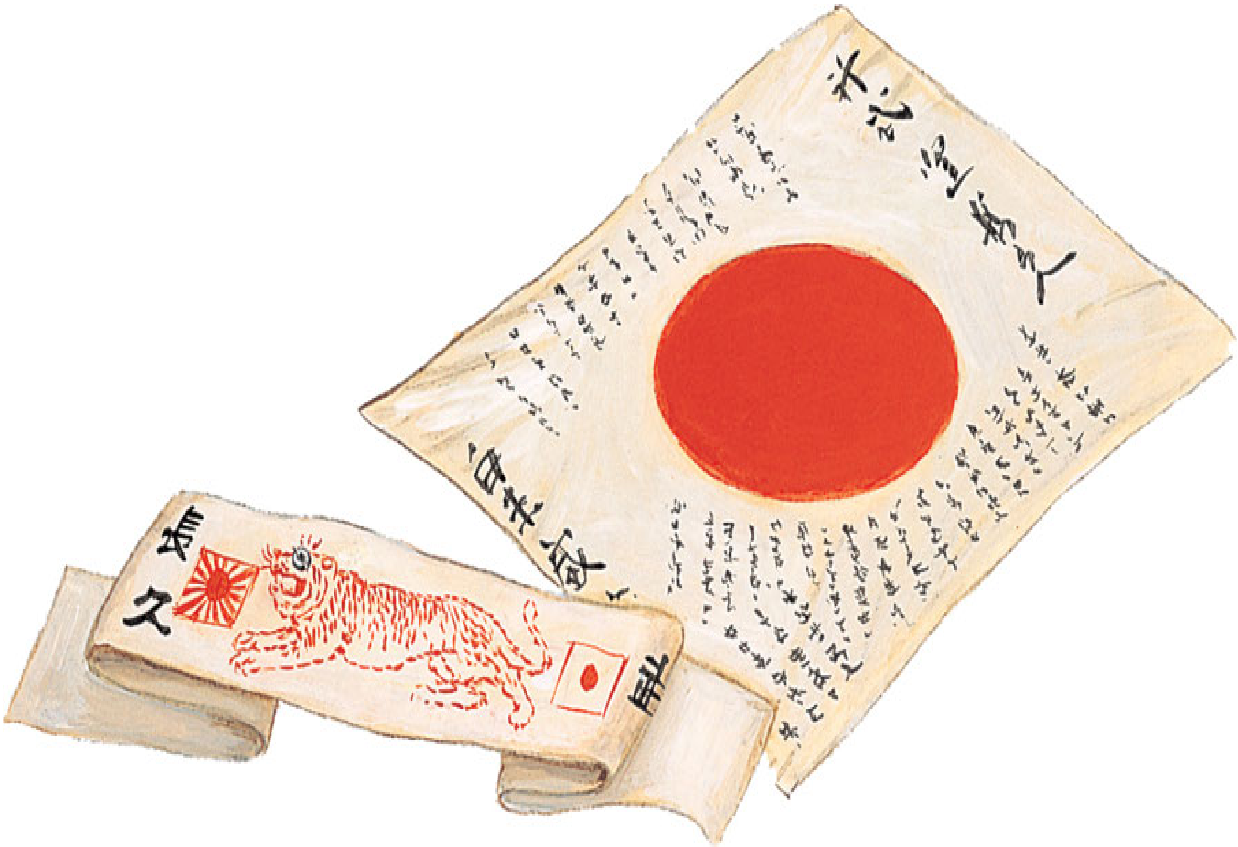
1942



Artwork by Stephen Andrew, from MAA 362: The Japanese Army 1931–45 (1), by Philip Jowett.

The rapid Japanese victories in South-East Asia and the Pacific in 1941–42 owed little to their equipment, to sophisticated planning, or to any familiarity with jungle fighting – but everything to aggression, opportunism, and disregard of losses. Brutally disciplined, and indoctrinated with a sacrificial devotion to their nation's cause, Japanese soldiers were trained to advance and attack whatever the terrain and whatever the odds, regarding death in battle as glorious martyrdom. Since Japan was unable to sustain its new, far-flung garrisons, and neglected defensive planning, defeat was therefore inevitable once America built up strong and well-equipped forces in the Pacific and the British and Indian armies took the offensive in Burma. After fighting to the last, many Japanese killed themselves rather than surrender.

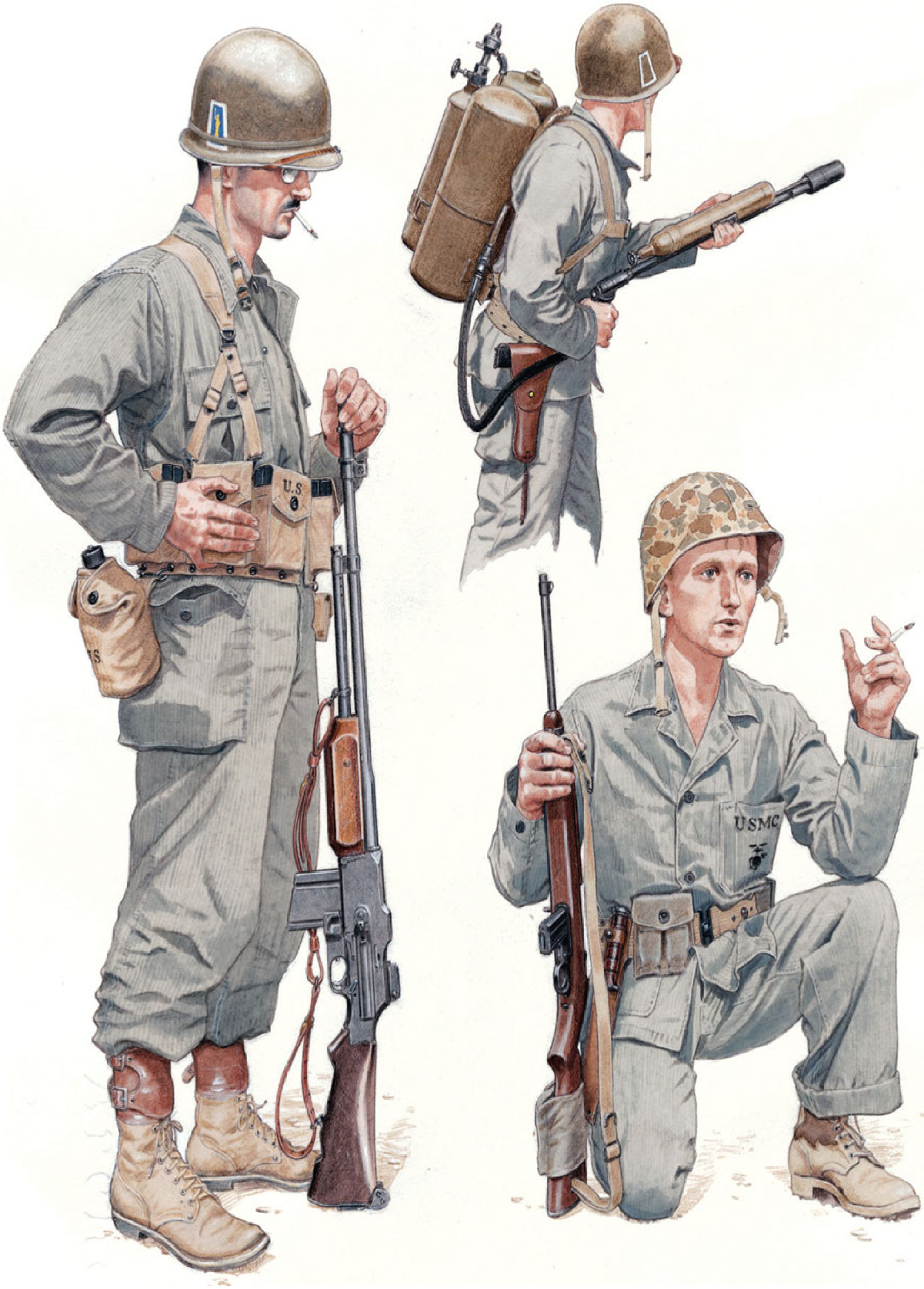
Their uniforms and equipment were conventional for the 1930s, though light mortars and rifle-grenade launchers (centre) were unusually plentiful. The use of tied cloth tapes rather than leather straps for some items was economical, but vulnerable to jungle humidity. Japanese culture explained some anachronisms: e.g., the helmet was held on by tapes that had to be tied in a particular pattern (left), and officers and senior NCOs still carried swords in battle (right).



Rising sun flag and “belt of a thousand stitches”, inscribed with best wishes from the soldier’s friends and family. Artwork by Michael Welply, from WAR 95: Japanese Infantryman 1937–45, by Gordon L Rottman.

US TROOPS, OKINAWA

1945


U.S
USMC

Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 342: The US Army in World War II (1), by Mark R Henry.

US forces in the Pacific were initially dressed in light khaki, which was too conspicuous for jungle fighting, so they adopted the greenish ‘HBT’ fatigue uniform as field dress. From 1943 this was darker green, and the trousers had useful leg cargo pockets (left). Various models of camouflage uniforms were produced for both the Army and Marine Corps from 1942, but after some combat experience the USMC kept only the helmet-cover (right), and otherwise these ‘frogskins’ were retained only for reconnaissance scouts and snipers. Before the late-war issue of the 1944 double-buckle boots (left) most men preferred loose-hanging trousers to the awkward leggings. Insignia were hardly ever worn in the field, but a couple of divisions – e.g. the 77th (left) – painted simplified forms of their shoulder patches on the helmet.

For heavy-weapon and vehicle crews the lightweight .30cal carbine (right) to some extent replaced the .45cal pistol. The powerful 8-round .30cal Garand semi-automatic rifle was the most modern standard-issue weapon of the war. Each squad had at least one Browning Automatic Rifle (left), and some squad leaders carried .45cal Thompson or later M3 ‘grease-gun’ sub-machine guns. The gruelling island-by-island advance across the Pacific also saw much use of flamethrowers (top right) and demolition charges against Japanese bunkers and fortified caves.

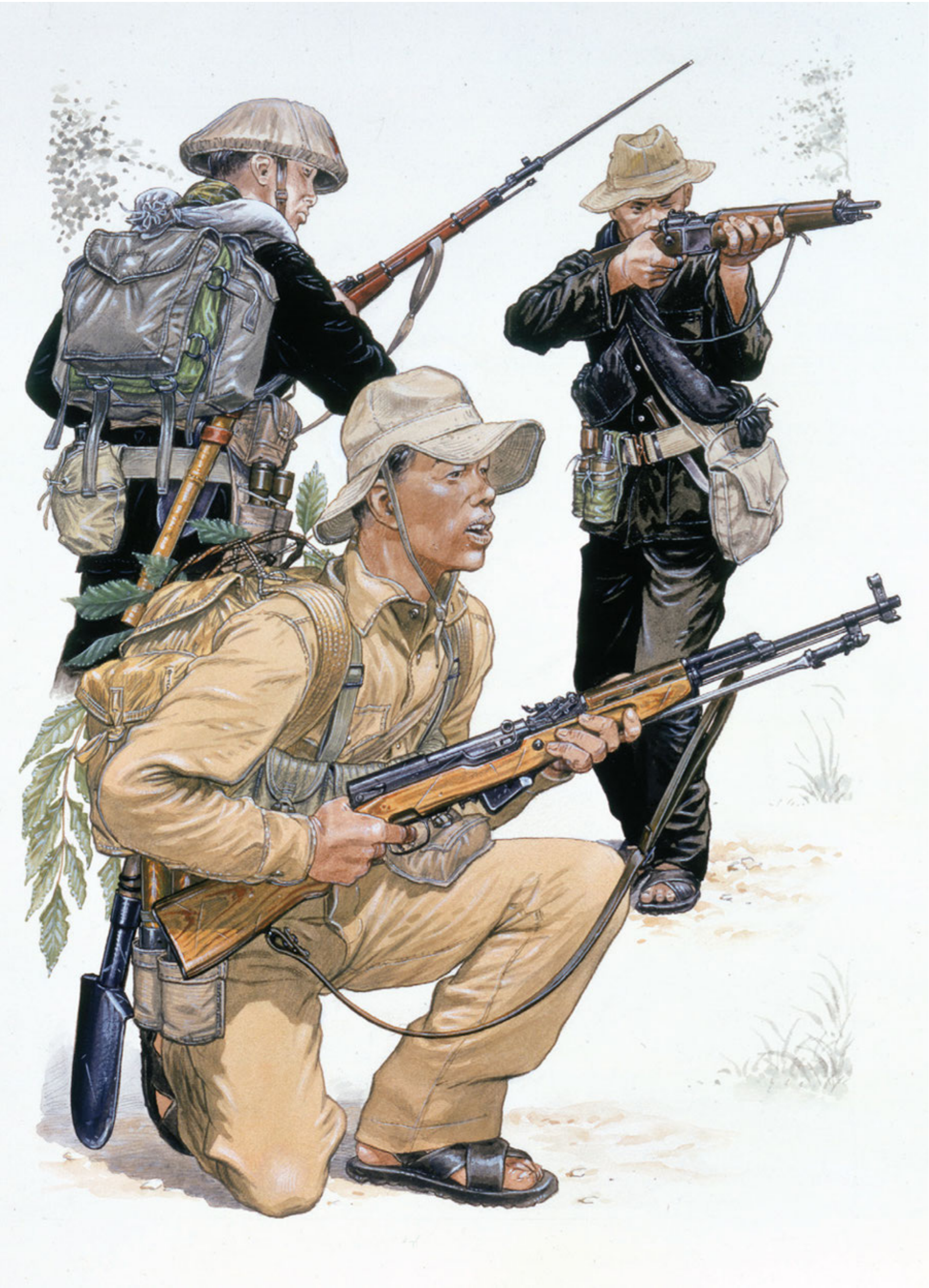
MODERN WARFARE

1945 to present day

Artwork by Ramiro Bujeiro, from WAR 23: US Marine Rifleman in Vietnam 1965–73, by Charles Melson (top); and by Adam Hook, from WAR 140: US Mechanized Infantryman in the First Gulf War, by Gordon L Rottman (bottom).

VIET CONG GUERILLAS, VIETNAM

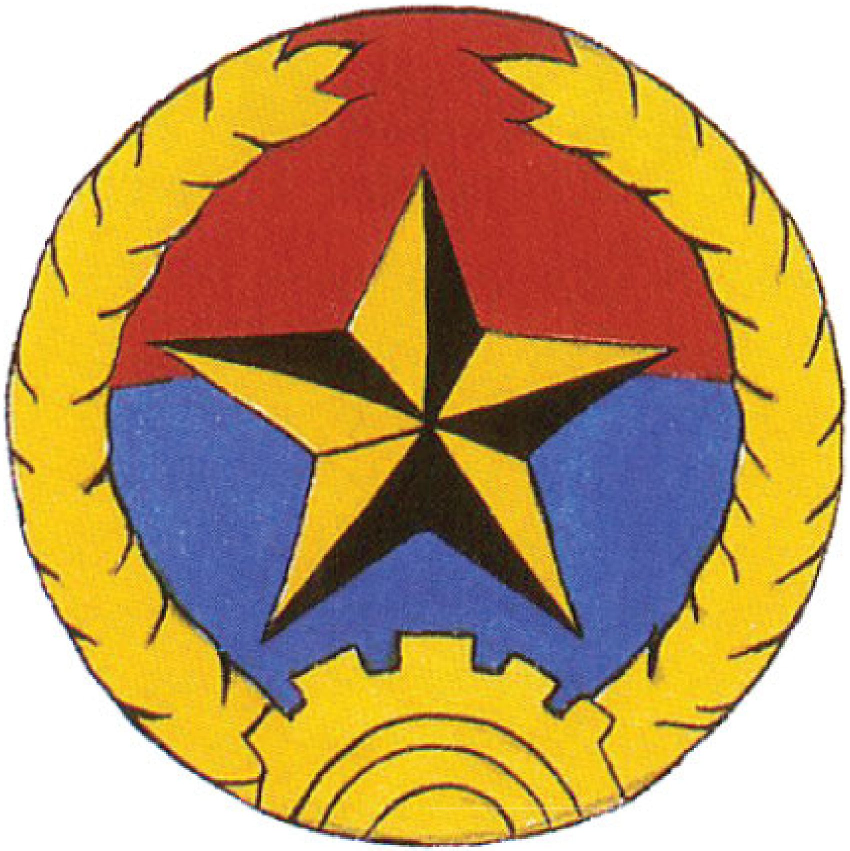
1960s



Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 143: Armies of the Vietnam War (2), by Lee E Russell.

Aided from 1949 by neighbouring Communist China, the Vietnamese political and military leaders Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap built their Viet Minh guerrillas into an army that defeated the occupying French in 1954. When Vietnam was divided into a Communist North and a US-supported South, the Viet Minh simply morphed into both the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), and the 'southern' Viet Cong guerrillas (in fact, always controlled from Hanoi). The latter persisted with a brilliant hit-and-run war of concealment and evasion, which continued after major US forces were committed to South Vietnam in 1965. In 1968 most genuine southern Viet Cong were wiped out following their premature 'Tet offensive' against southern cities.

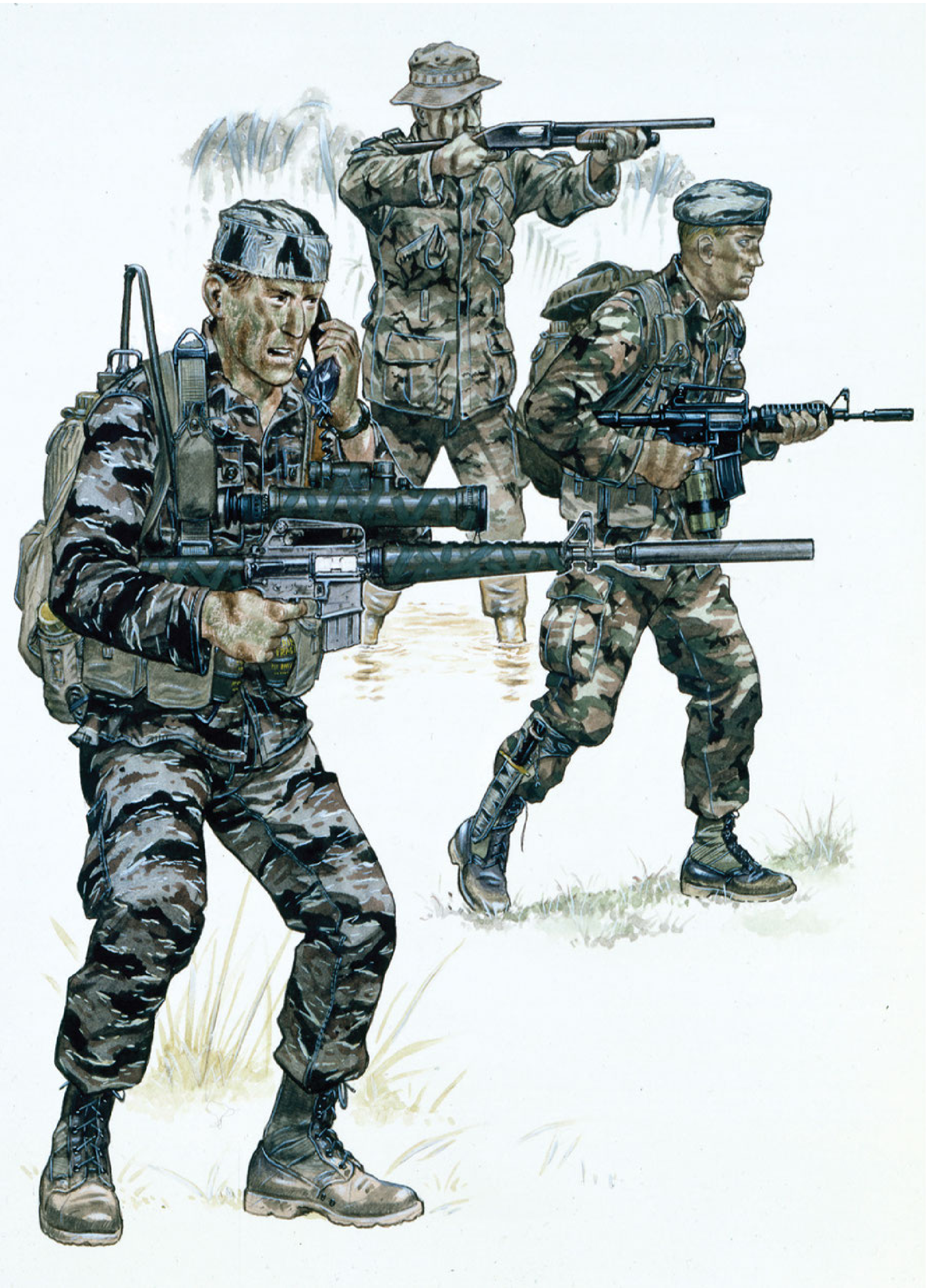
While they received Communist-bloc supplies they were always masters of improvisation, making much equipment locally. They wore either black peasant clothing (left and right) or khaki NVA-supplied uniform (centre); headgear were bush hats or plastic sun-helmets, and footwear often 'Ho Chi Minh' sandals made from old motor tyres. Home-made equipment evolved into 'ChiCom'-style webbing chest rigs of magazine and grenade pouches. Weapons ranged from old French MAS36 rifles (right) to Chinese copies of Soviet types, such as the Type 56 (centre). The guerrillas carried several days' rice rations in cloth rolls slung around the body, and were experts in camouflage.



People’s Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) cap badge, 1973. Artwork by Simon McCouaig, from ELI 38: The NVA and Viet Cong, by Ken Conboy and Ken Bowra.

US SPECIAL FORCES, VIETNAM

1968



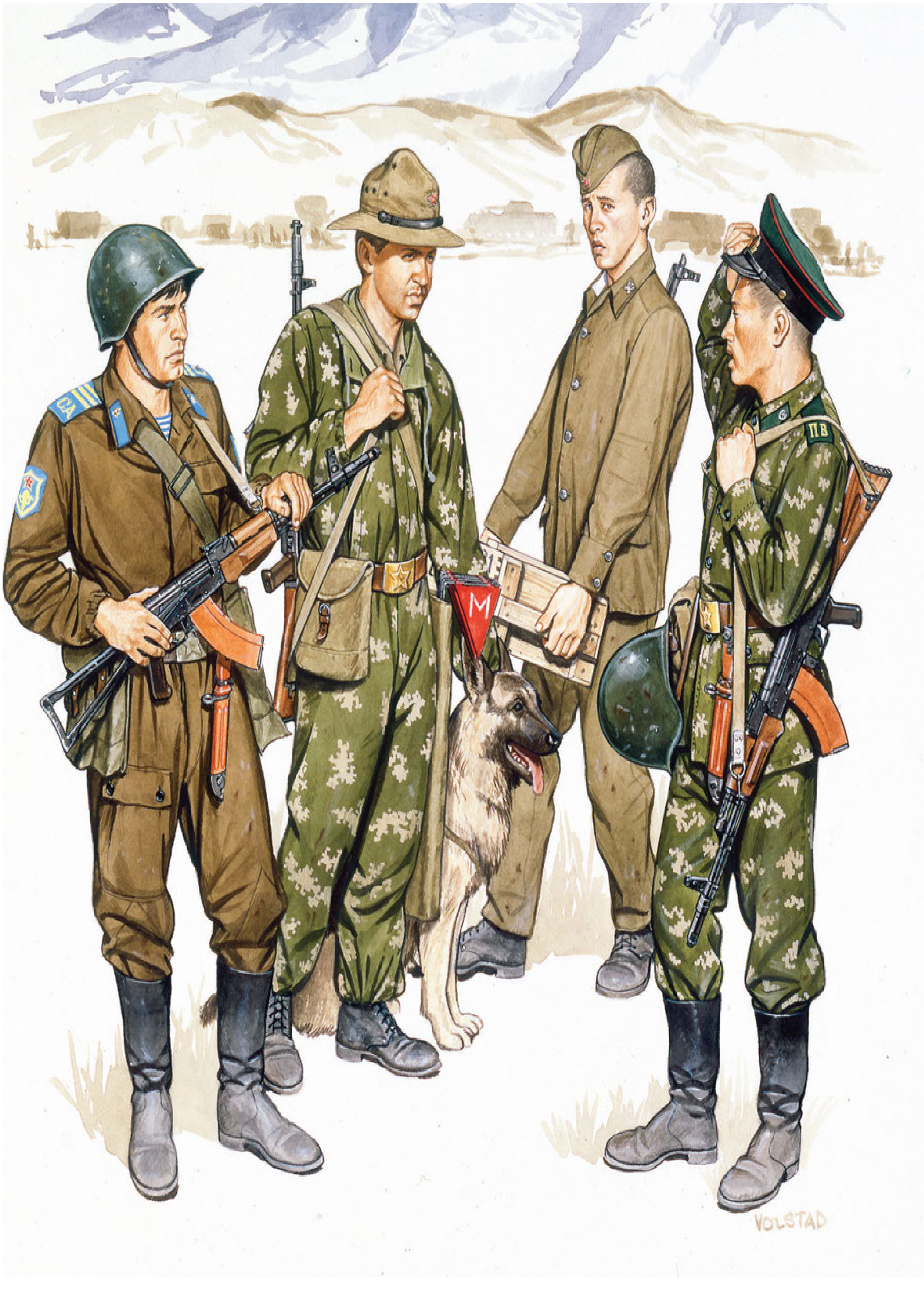
Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 143: Armies of the Vietnam War (2), by Lee E Russell.

In Vietnam several unconventional US ‘commando’-style units took the war to the enemy in the jungle hills and swamps. The US Army Special Forces or ‘Green Berets’ (left) had been in-country since 1957. The US Navy SEALs (‘Sea, Air, Land’ – centre) arrived in 1966; originally demolition-trained frogmen, they carried out a variety of mostly riverine missions. Formations also created their own LRRPs (‘Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols’ – right). Such units shared high selection standards, and demanding training in a wide range of skills, for clandestine insertion into enemy-dominated country in small, self-sufficient teams. Their primary mission was reconnaissance, but they carried heavy firepower.

Such teams procured and assembled whatever kit they needed. Local ‘tiger-stripe’ (left) and US Marine 1968 ‘leaf-pattern’ camouflage uniforms were commonly worn, with jungle boots, and various headgear. The standard 1956 web equipment was modified to individual choice, and the necessarily heavy loads included radios, several water-bottles, air-extraction harness, and plentiful munitions. The 5.56mm M-16 rifle was often modified with night sights and/or a silencer (left), or replaced at need with such weapons as short carbines or close-range shotguns (right, and centre).

SOVIET TROOPS, AFGHANISTAN

1980


СА
М
ПВ
VOLSTAD

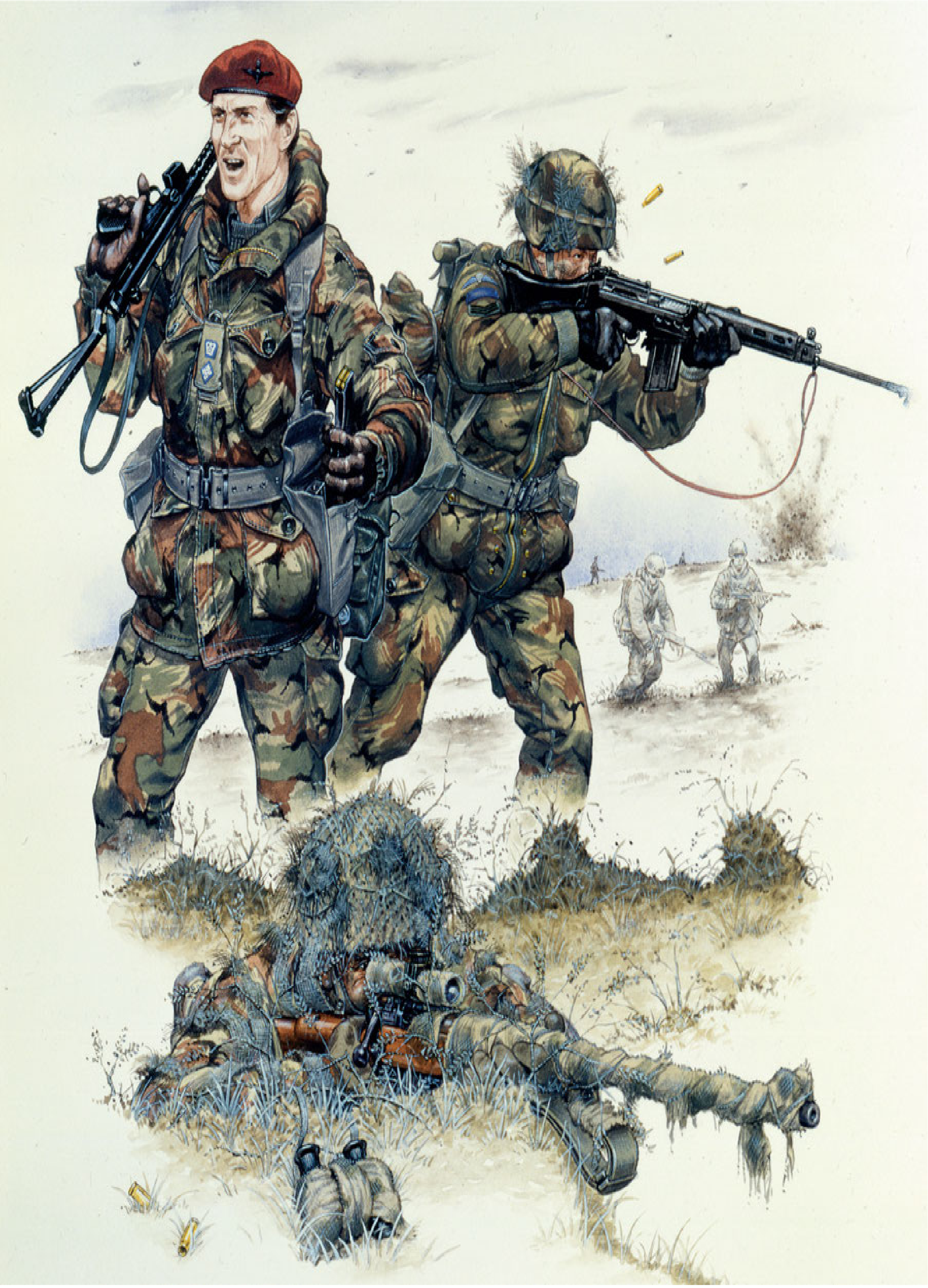
Artwork by Ronald Volstad, from MAA 178: Russia's War in Afghanistan, by David Isby.

In December 1979 Soviet Spetsnaz special forces (see here) launched a coup to replace an Afghan Communist dictator who was in danger of being ousted by Islamic guerrillas. During the subsequent occupation the 'Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces in Afghanistan' proved quite unable to control a country-wide uprising in mountain terrain, supported from havens in neighbouring Pakistan. Despite artillery and airpower, attempts to clear resistance heartlands such as the Panjshir Valley repeatedly failed, and the war turned into a meatgrinder for the patchily-trained Soviet conscripts. New weapons – particularly US 'Stinger' ground-to-air missiles – prolonged the resistance until, in February 1989, the Soviet forces withdrew. The rapid collapse of their client regime started years of anarchic struggles between rival tribal warlords.

The uniforms of the elite Airborne units (left) were distinguished by pale blue berets and insignia, and striped vests. In the field many troops wore a bush hat, and camouflage overalls; the engineer (second left) has a mine-sniffer dog. The crack KGB Border Guards (right), with green caps and distinctions, maintained a smart appearance even when in their two-piece camouflage uniform. The standard weapon was the 5.45mm AK-74 assault rifle, issued to paratroopers in the folding-butt AKSD version.

BRITISH PARATROOPERS, FALKLANDS

1982



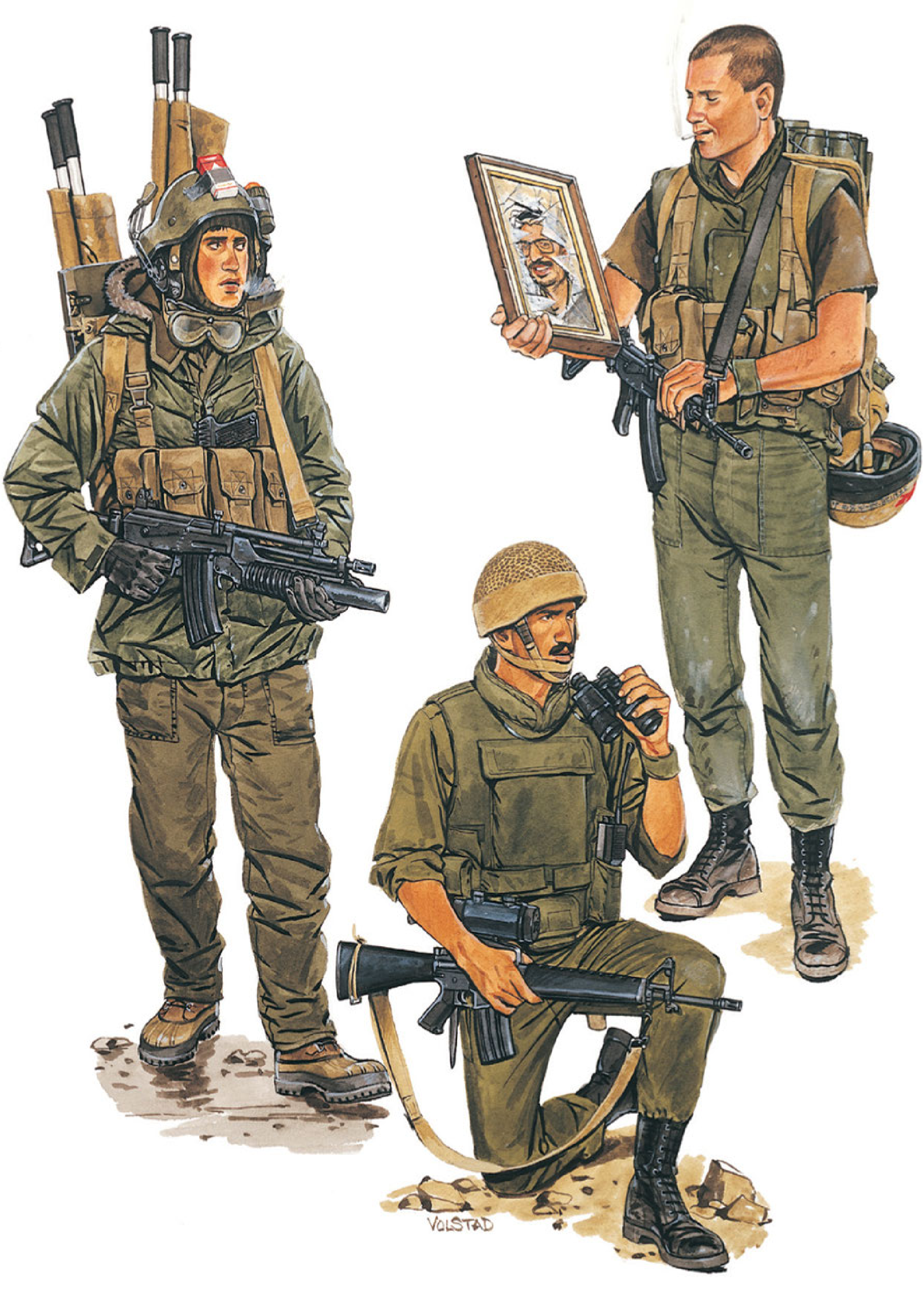
Artwork by Mike Chappell, from MAA 133: Battle for the Falklands (1), by William Fowler.

On 2 April 1982 an Argentine military junta tried to distract internal opposition by launching an invasion of the British Falkland Islands – which Argentina historically claimed, but which were inhabited solely by British sheep-farmers. This miscalculation provoked Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher into sending a task force to retake the islands. Despite its modest strength, and the enormous difficulties of launching an amphibious attack 8,000 miles from home in the South Atlantic winter, the operation was a success. The mainly conscript Argentine garrison surrendered to the British professionals on 14 June (and the military dictatorship in Buenos Aires did not long survive).

The spearhead British units were from the Parachute Regiment and Royal Marine Commandos, and the British fought several bitter battalion actions against dug-in opposition. That by 2nd Bn, Parachute Regt at Goose Green on 28 May cost them 13 killed including their commander, LtCol H. Jones (left), who was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. Paras like to wear their red beret even in action, but standard gear was a ballistic helmet of non-metallic material; windproof hooded smocks (left) or jump-smocks (right) and overtrousers in DPM camouflage; and 1958 webbing. The weapons illustrated are the 9mm Sterling SMG (left), 7.62mm semi-automatic SLR, and (foreground) 7.62mm L4A1 sniper rifle.

ISRAELI DEFENCE FORCE

1982–85


VOLSTAD

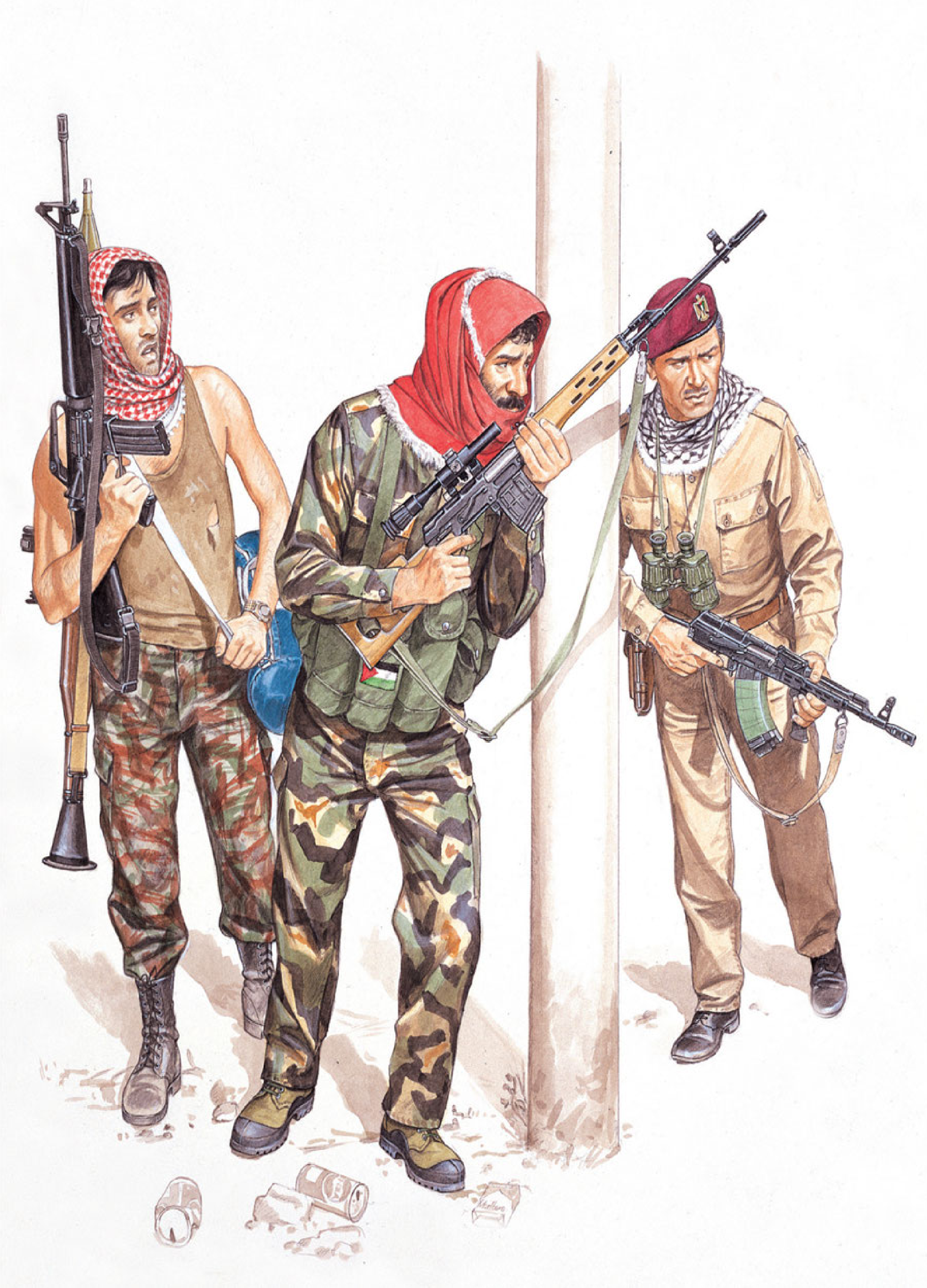
Artwork by Ronald Volstad, from ELI 18: Israeli Elite Units since 1948, by Samuel Katz.

The modern IDF has always assembled equipment from the best available sources, whether Western, Israeli-designed or Soviet-bloc models.

The pouches of the highly adjustable EPHOD webbing can be substituted or shifted at individual need. Multi-layered fabric body armour – which stops e.g. grenade or small shell fragments, but not high-velocity bullets – has evolved since the US ‘flak vests’ of the Korean War (1950–53), but protection always has to be balanced against weight. Sophisticated materials such as Kevlar are now used for both helmets and armour. The Kevlar vest (right) could be reinforced with a heavy, bulletproof ceramic chest plate (centre); this vest also had integral pouches, reducing the need for web gear to hold ammo, a hand-held radio, and a water-bottle at the rear. The infantryman dismounted from an armoured personnel carrier (left) has a Kevlar crewman’s helmet – with his cigarettes taped to the front – and carries a folded stretcher on his back. In harsh weather he wears a rainproof over an insulated suit, and fur-lined boots. In the 1980s Israel was phasing out the US M-16 rifle series (centre) in favour of its own 5.56mm Galil (right); the AFV crews’ Glilon (left) has a folding butt, and here an attached 40mm US M-203 grenade launcher.

ARAB IRREGULARS, LEBANON

1982–83



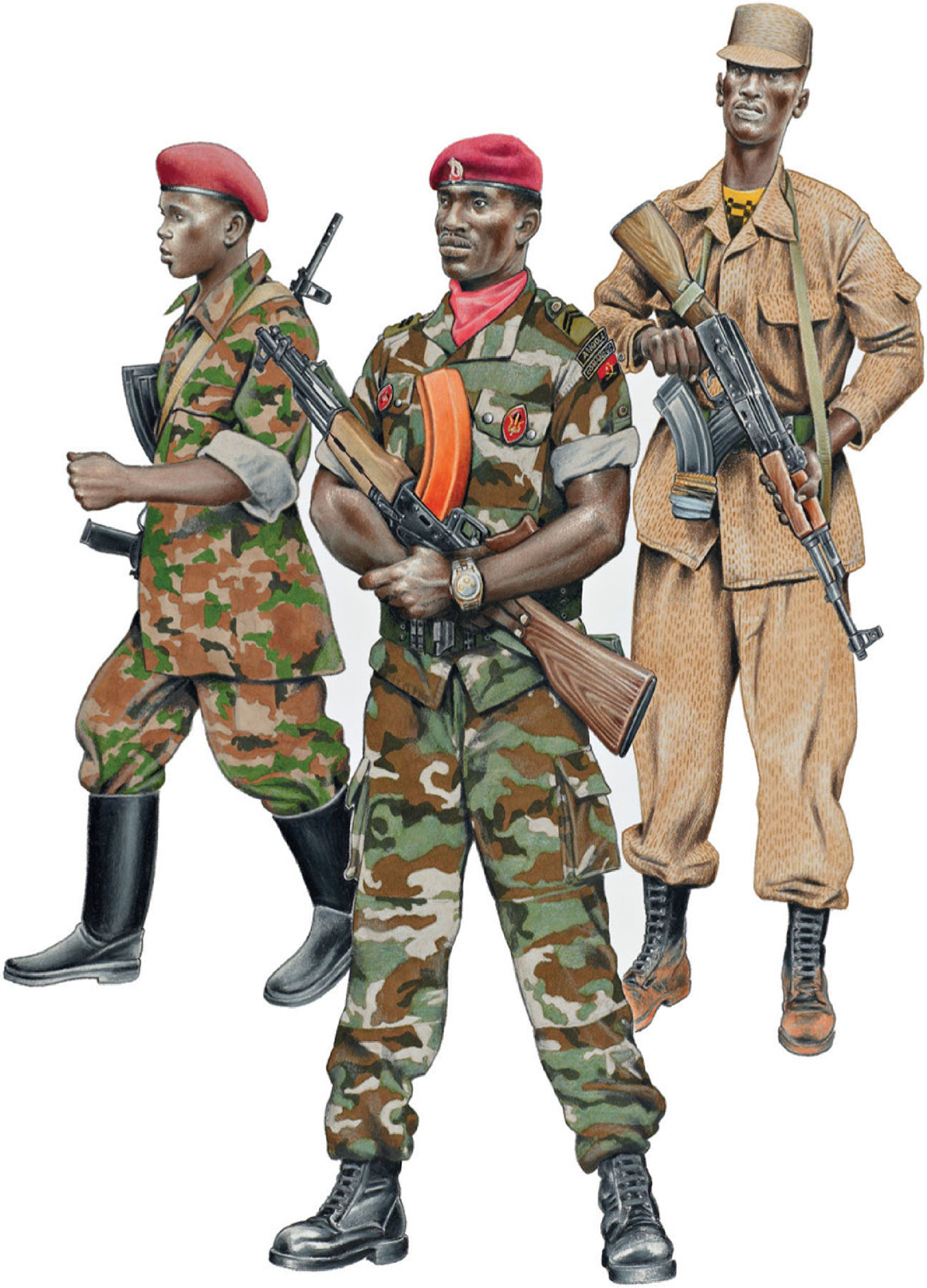
Artwork by Ronald Volstad, from MAA 165: Armies in Lebanon 1982–84, by Samuel Katz and Lee E Russell.

The endless wars in the Middle East have given birth to many para-military organizations. The clients and proxies of several rival Muslim regimes, these have varied widely in their military effectiveness, and have used a galaxy of different uniforms and weaponry.

The uneasy balance of communities in Lebanon, where a large Palestinian minority created anti-Israeli forces, was destroyed by civil war in 1975–76. The chaos provoked both a widespread Syrian occupation, and later an Israeli military incursion. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the ‘umbrella’ for anti-Israeli action, was riven by internal disputes. Here a Marxist guerrilla (left) of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) wears the ubiquitous Arab keffiyeh, a Syrian Army T-shirt and PLO ‘lizard’-pattern trousers; his weapons are a US M-16 and a Soviet RPG grenade launcher, for which he carries reloads in a sports bag. The sniper (centre) wears another pattern of indigenous PLO camouflage clothing and local ‘ChiCom’-style chest pouches, and carries a Soviet 7.62mm Dragunov SVD. The officer (right) of the Baghdad-based Arab Liberation Front faction (ALF) here affects Iraqi military uniform with a PLO beret badge. His main weapon is a Hungarian AMD-65 version of the 7.62mm AK-47.

TROOPS IN CONGO

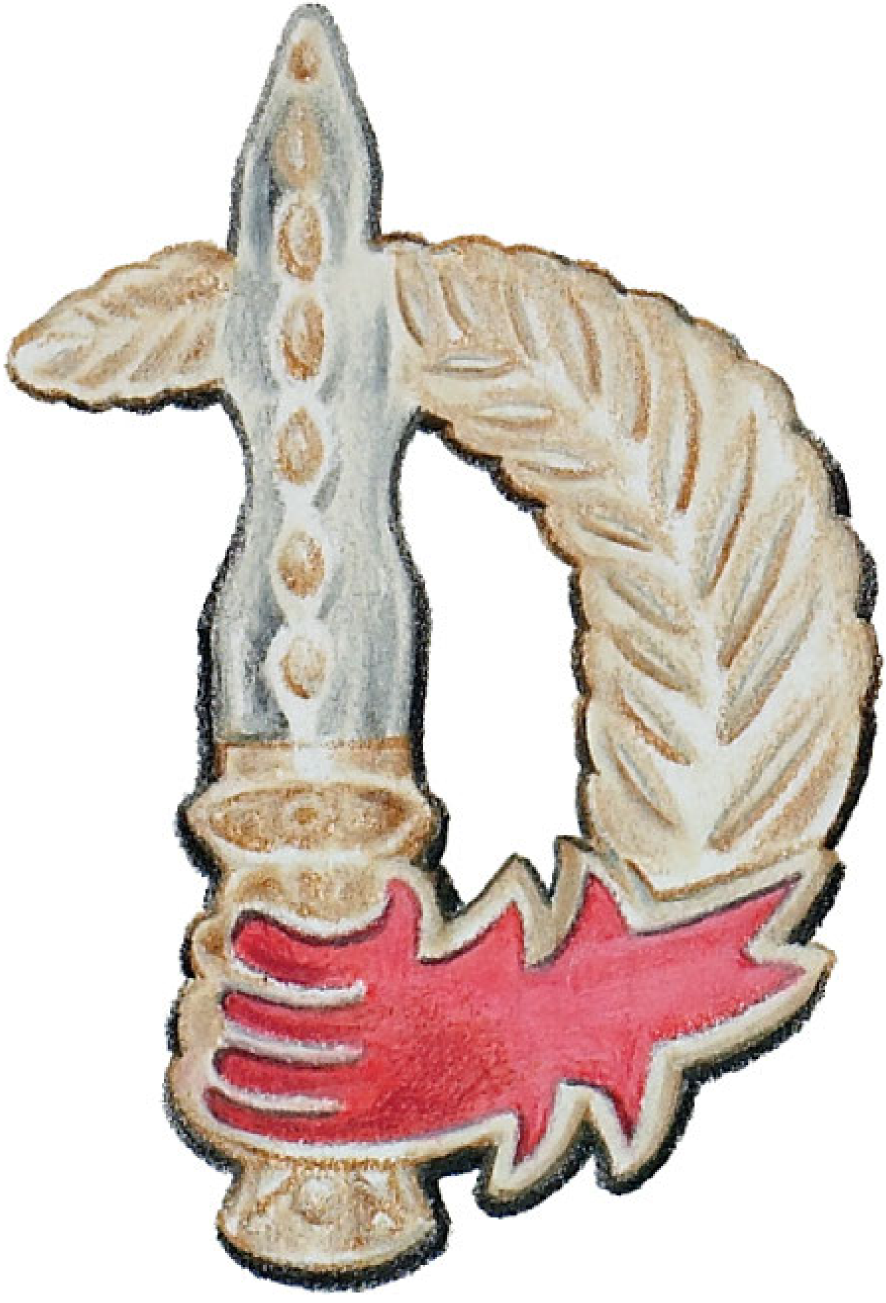
1998–2002



Artwork by Raffaele Ruggeri, from MAA 492: Modern African Wars (4), by Peter Abbott.

The Congo or Zaire, with an area of a million square miles containing scores of mutually hostile tribes, has been torn by almost continuous civil war and murderous chaos since independence from Belgium in 1960. In 1998–2002 it was the arena for Africa's 'First Continental War', involving rival Congolese factions backed by troops – with artillery, armour, and some air support – from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Tchad. Even since these withdrew the eastern Congo has continued to suffer violent anarchy, widespread famine and disease, which have cost several million lives.

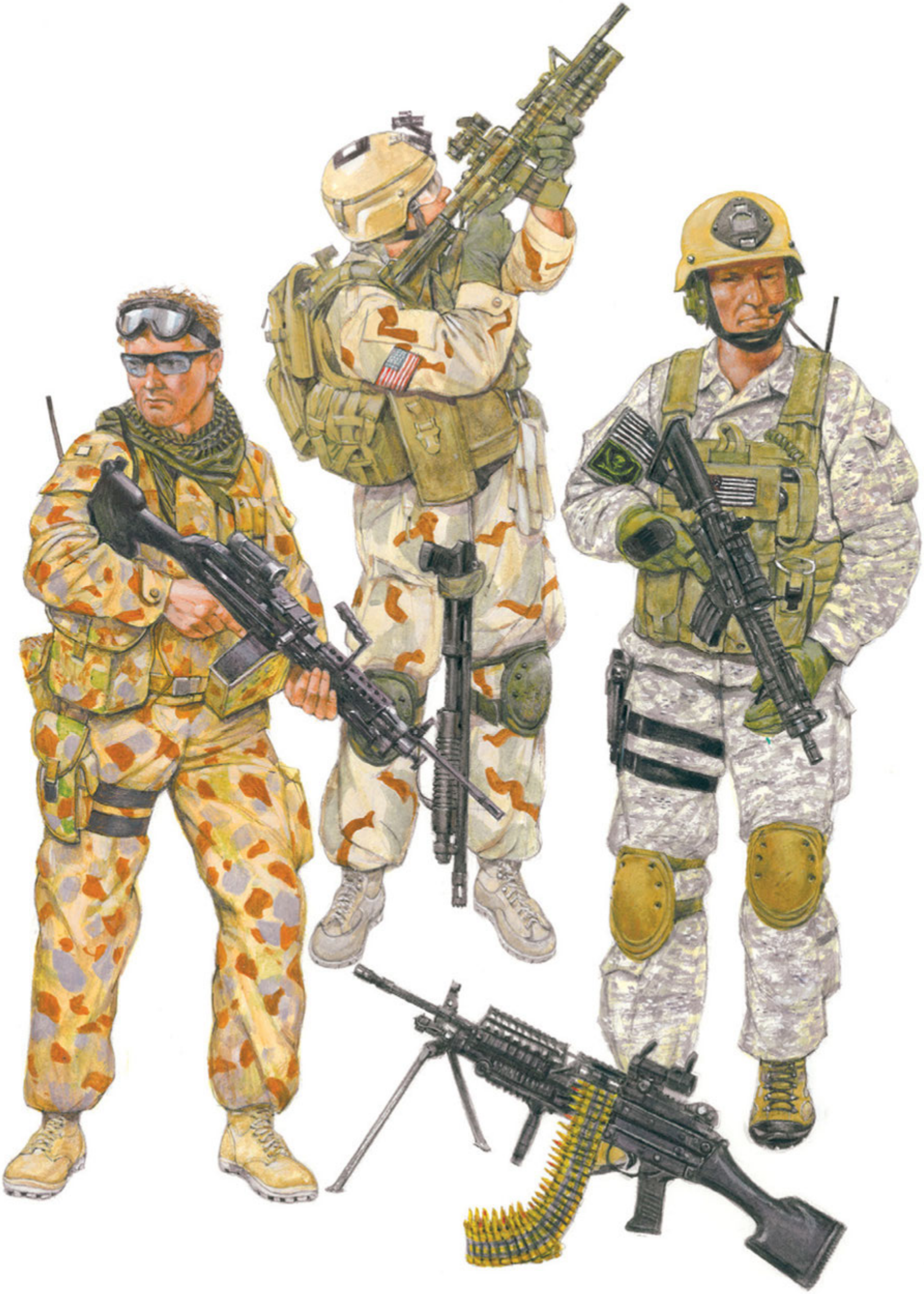
A feature of African conflict has been the enlistment, often forced, of young boys; this rubber-booted kadogo ('a small, negligible thing') of Congolese President Kabila's forces (left) can hardly carry his AKS. The Angolan intervention force was relatively professional: this Comando corporal (centre) parades with his AKM in indigenous camouflage uniform adorned with rank slides, national and 'Comando' shoulder titles above a national sleeve patch, and chest badges of qualification and unit. During the war both Hutu and Tutsi Rwandan forces invaded Congolese territory; this Tutsi (right) of the successful Armée Pariotique Rwandaise wears East German 'raindrop' camouflage.



Cap badge worn by the Angolan Commando Brigade.

COALITION SPECIAL FORCES, IRAQ

2004



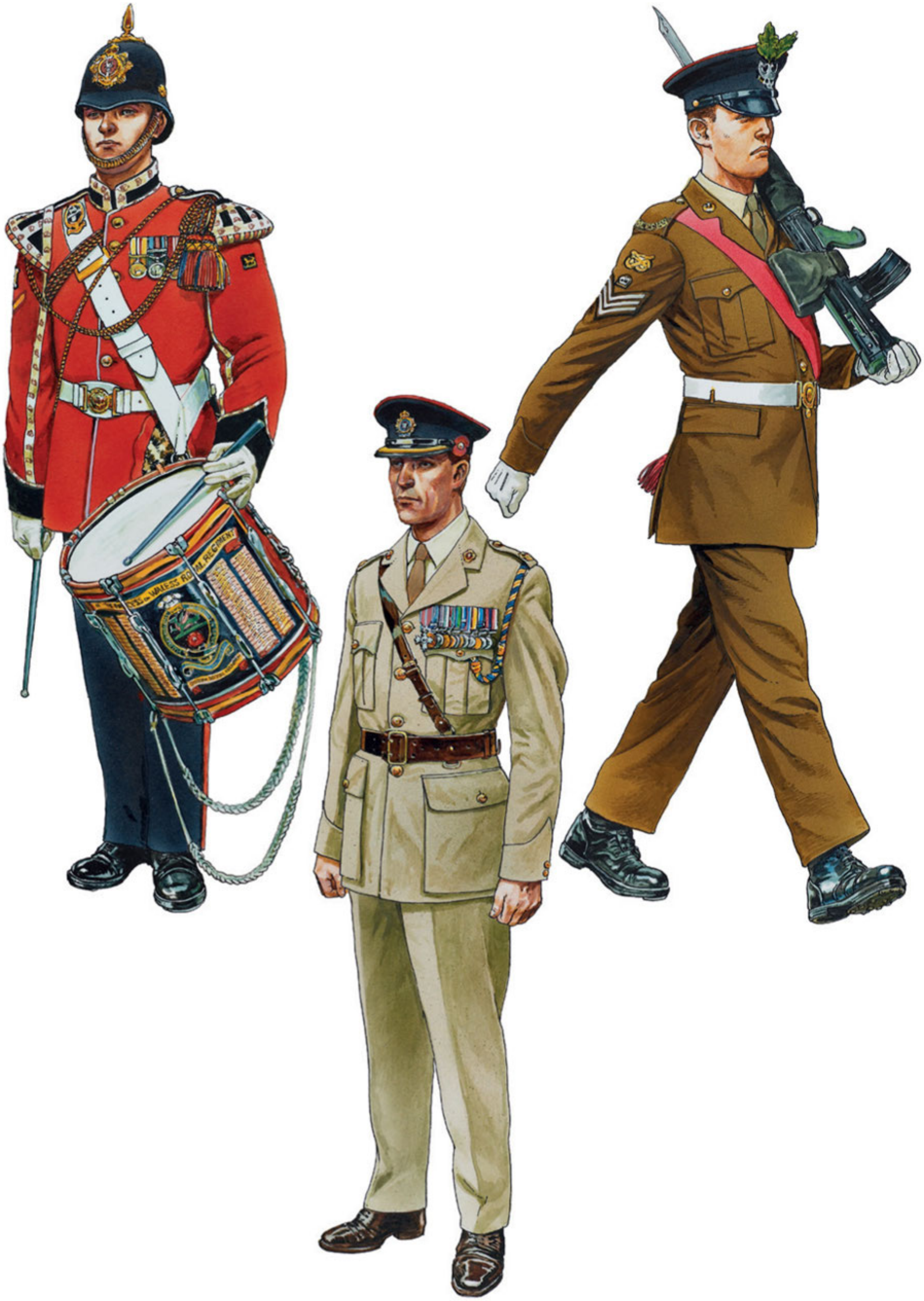
Artwork by Richard Hook, from ELI 170: Special Operations Forces in Iraq, by Leigh Neville.

Apart from the USA, large, armour-heavy armies have disappeared from the West since the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Conscripts have long been replaced by all-volunteer forces, and the huge cost of modern high-tech equipment has also kept most armies small. Special forces therefore have an increasingly important role, and the ‘mixing-and-matching’ of their equipment and weaponry has become more pronounced during mutual cooperation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Camouflage patterns are sometimes designed to hamper infrared devices as well as human eyes, and most soldiers have knee-pads, pistols, helmets fitted for night-vision equipment, personal radios, and advanced optical and/or infrared rifle sights. This Australian Commando (left) carries a licence-built Belgian Minimi LMG. Both he and the US Ranger wearing DCU clothing (centre) have acquired commercial types of load-bearing vest to replace issue web gear. The Ranger carries both a 5.56mm M4A1 carbine fitted with a grenade-launcher, and a 12-bore shotgun for blowing down doors. The US Navy SEAL (right) wears the latest ACU camouflage; he too has a MICH helmet, but his tactical vest and boots are commercially acquired. The Mk 48 LMG at his feet is in 7.62mm – such larger-calibre weapons are still needed for their superior penetration.

BRITISH CEREMONIAL AND PARADE UNIFORMS

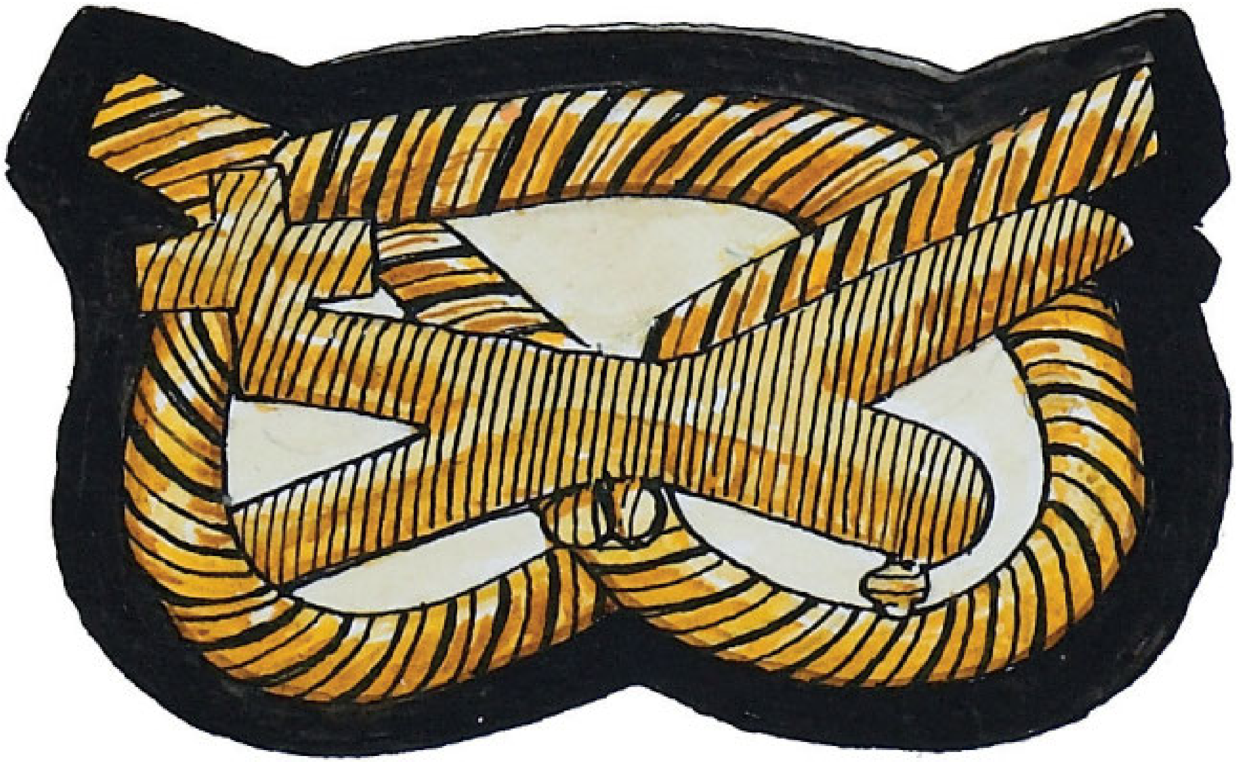
2012


WALES'S ROYAL REGIMENT

Artwork by Peter Dennis, from ELI 202: The British Army since 2000, by James Tanner.

Despite many unit amalgamations in recent decades, the British Army preserves esprit-de-corps by commemorating the antecedent historical regiments in ‘tribal’ traditions, and insignia worn with formal orders of dress, when immaculate smartness and drill are demanded.

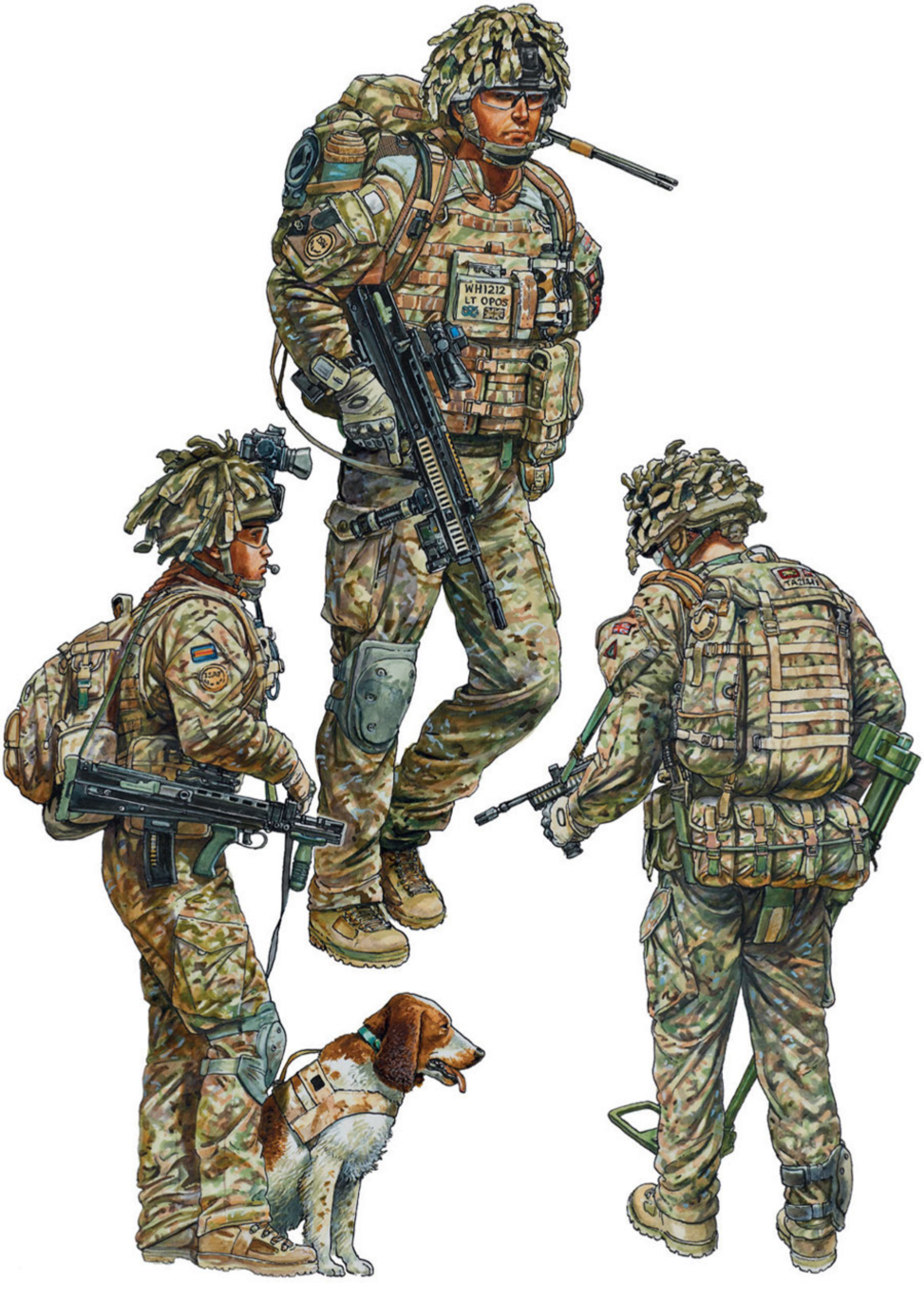
The red ceremonial tunic is worn not only by Her Majesty’s Household Division, but also by the drummers of line regiments (left), who differ little from those of the 1880s; the drum is painted with battlehonours stretching back to the 17th century. Historic regimental facing-colours are recalled in shoulder lanyards (centre); this long-serving officer in summer service dress is also a reminder of the many medals for campaign service, merit and gallantry that have been awarded in recent decades. The other ranks’ service dress, as worn by the colour-sergeant of the new, large Mercian Regiment (right), bears regimental cap and collar badges which incorporate as far as possible those of its forebears. White belt and gloves, and traditional oakleaves on the cap, are worn for a parade in front of the royal colonel-in-chief. The special right shoulder badge of a glider, set on the ancient ‘Staffordshire knot’, commemorates the World War II service of the ‘ancestor’ 2nd Bn South Staffordshire Regt in 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem.



Special arm badge worn by the colour-sergeant of the 2nd Bn Mercian Regt.

BRITISH TROOPS, AFGHANISTAN

2013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LT OPOS

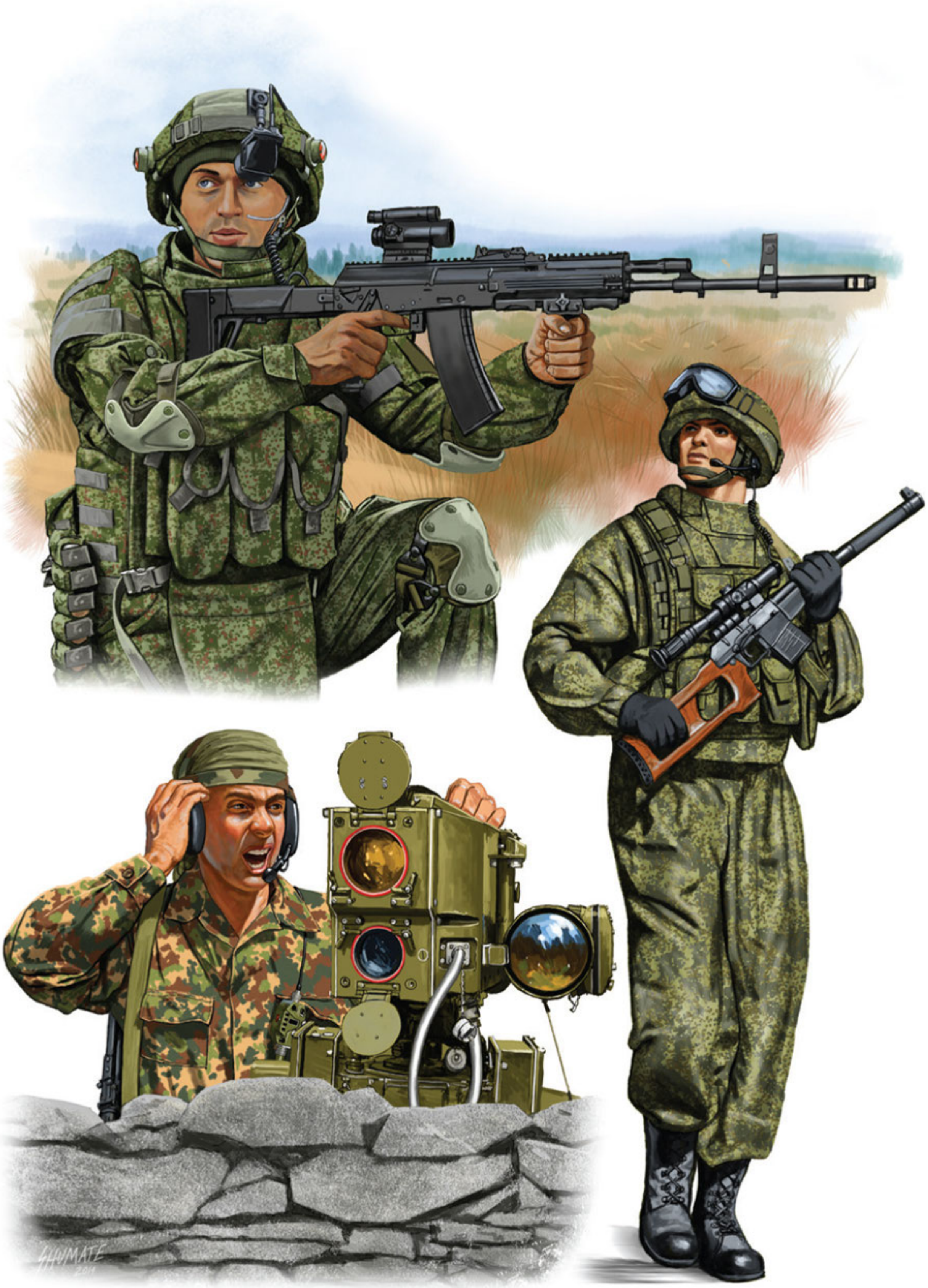
Artwork by Peter Dennis, from ELI 202: The British Army since 2000, by James Tanner.

The infantryman's equipment has changed out of all recognition over the past 30 years. This platoon commander (centre) wears ballistic eye protection, the latest Kevlar helmet, armour, and MTP camouflage uniform. Unit and formation flashes are attached with Velcro to the sleeve pockets, which contain tourniquets, below strips of 'glint' tape for night recognition. Pouches, including one with the controls for the radio in his pack, are arranged to his choice on a 'ladder' of strips across his Osprey armour vest; one displays a 'zap patch' with his serial number and blood group. He has a digital navigation system on his wrist, and his 5.56mm L85A2 rifle has the latest operational modifications.

Water is now carried in a soft container strapped to the daypack (right), with a drinking-tube over the shoulder. This soldier's mine-detector, and the just-visible attachment for extra pelvic armour, are reminders of the lethal threat posed by 'improvised explosive devices' (IEDs). A less technical but still effective counter to IEDs is provided by sniffer-dogs (left) of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps. The dog-handler, fully equipped with night-vision goggles, personal radio and L22A1 carbine, is a female soldier. While officially still banned from infantry and armour combat units, women performing support tasks are today often exposed to the dangers of battle.

RUSSIAN SPETSNAZ

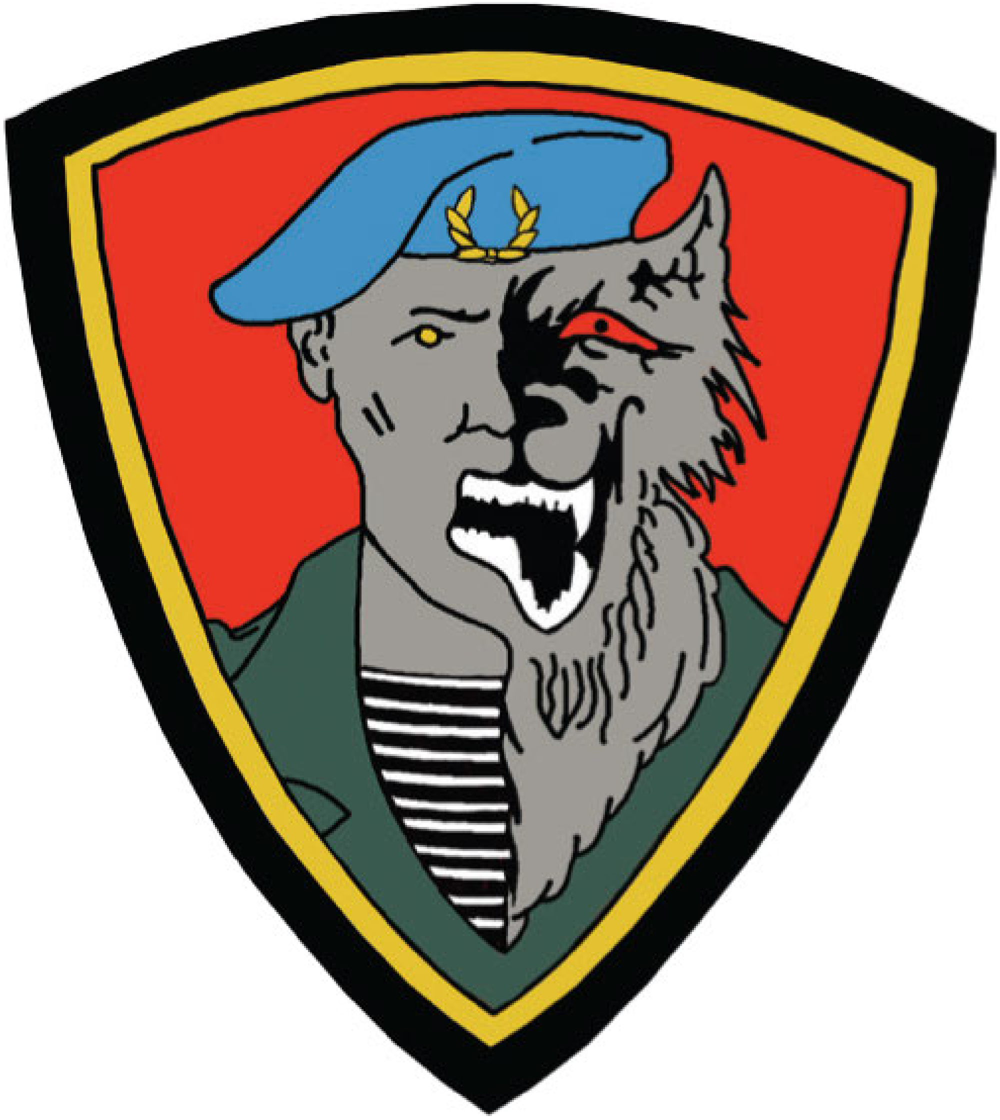
2008–14


SHUMATE

Artwork by Johnny Shumate, from ELI 206: Spetsnaz : Russia’s Special Forces, by Mark Galeotti.

The Soviet ‘special purpose’ reconnaissance troops of the GRU (military intelligence) were born during the Cold War, but they really came of age in Afghanistan (1979–89). After the 1991 collapse of the USSR – and the subsequent near-collapse of the neglected and disorganized Army – they were misused, as one of the few reliable assets available, in the First Chechen War (1994–96). Their special skills were better focused in Putin’s Second Chechen War (1999–2009), and particularly in Georgia (2008) and Crimea (2014). The bulk of the Russian Army is a fairly old-fashioned conscript force, so Spetsnaz are important for interventions in Russia’s ‘near abroad’. Although there are nominally 13-plus brigades many Spetsnaz are also conscripts, and it is believed that the true elite is surprisingly small.

Since Spetsnaz scouts operated laser rangefinder/target designators (bottom left) for artillery and airstrikes in Georgia, they have received new Ratnik (‘Warrior’) uniform and equipment; the operator parading in Moscow after the Crimea take-over (right) has digital ‘Flora’ battledress, 6B43 armour, and a VSS Vintorex silenced, short-range sniper rifle. The soldier on exercise (top) has laser ‘hit’-sensors on his 6B27 helmet and a new personal radio, and is trialling an AK-12 assault rifle.



Example of unofficial insignia of the Spetsnaz, who take the wolf as their symbol.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ADAM HOOK

The eldest son of Richard Hook, Adam studied graphic design, and began his work as an illustrator in 1983. He specializes in detailed historical reconstructions. His work features in exhibitions and publications throughout the world. For more on Adam, please visit his website at http://www.adamhookillustration.com/.

ANDREI KARACHTCHOUK

Andrei Karachtchouk was born in 1966. A well-established artist in Russia, Andrei is also an active re-enactor and sculptor who makes master-models for the UK based ‘Anglo-Russian Toy Soldier’ Company.

ANGUS MCBRIDE

Angus McBride was one of the world’s most respected historical illustrators, who contributed to more than 90 Osprey titles over three decades. Angus sadly passed away in 2007.

BRYAN FOSTEN

Bryan Fosten served in the army in Egypt and Palestine, and since 1973 has devoted himself to military research and illustration. He was also the founding editor of the innovative magazine Tradition.

CHRISTA HOOK

Christa Hook began her illustrating career in 1986, after studying under her father Richard Hook. Her work has featured extensively in the worlds of publishing and television, and is sought after by collectors worldwide. For more on Christa, please visit her website at http://www.christahook.co.uk/.

DARKO PAVLOVIC

Darko Pavlovic was born in 1959, and lives and works in Croatia. A trained architect, he now works as a full-time illustrator and writer, specializing in militaria. Darko has illustrated a number of books for Osprey.

ELIZABETH SHARP

Elizabeth Sharp trained in Fine Art at the Leicester College of Art and Technology. A full member of the Society of Equestrian Artists and the Society of Women Artists, she exhibits regularly in London.

GERRY EMBLETON

Gerry Embleton has been a leading illustrator and researcher of historical costume since the 1970s. He lives in Switzerland, where he has also become well-known for designing and creating life-size historical figures for museums. For more on Gerry, please visit his website at http://www.gerryembleton.com/.

GIUSEPPE RAVA

Giuseppe Rava was born in 1963. Entirely self-taught, he has established himself as a leading military history artist, and is inspired by the works of the great military artists, such as Detaille, Meissonier, and Angus McBride. For more on Giuseppe, please visit his website at http://www.g-rava.it/.

GRAHAM TURNER

Graham Turner is a leading historical artist, specializing in the medieval period. He has illustrated numerous titles for Osprey. The son of the illustrator Michael Turner, Graham lives and works in Buckinghamshire, UK. For more on Graham, please visit his website at http://www.studio88.co.uk/.

GUIDO ROSIGNOLI

A military artist of some repute, Guido Rosignoli illustrated several books on the flags of the Napoleonic Wars for the Osprey Men-at-Arms series. Sadly, he passed away in 2014.

JEFFREY BURN

Jeffrey Burn is a distinguished artist who has worked on several Osprey publications over the years. He is also a keen re-enactor, and lives in the Scottish Borders.

JOHNNY SHUMATE

Johnny Shumate began his career in 1987. His greatest influences are Angus McBride, Don Troiani, and Édouard Detaille. Johnny's interests include karate, running, Bible reading, history, and making English longbows. He currently lives in Tennessee. For more on Johnny, please visit his website at http://johnnyshumate.com/.

JONATHAN SMITH

Jonathan Smith studied fine art at Goldsmith's College of Art. He has had a lifelong interest in tribal peoples, and has travelled extensively in the USA and Canada. He currently lives and works in Cheltenham, UK.

MICHAEL PERRY

Michael Perry has worked for 22 years as a sculptor/designer for Games Workshop and Perry Miniatures. He has illustrated several books for Osprey.

MICHAEL WELPLY

Michael Welply began his illustrating career in 1977 and has worked for many publishers in Europe and the United States. He has illustrated over 50 books, ranging from historical work to fantasy and fairy tales. For more on Michael, please visit his website at http://www.michaelwelply.com/.

MIKE CHAPPELL

Mike Chappell retired from the British Army in 1974, after seeing service in Malaya, Cyprus, Swaziland, Libya, Germany, Ulster and home garrisons.

He began painting military subjects in 1968 and has gained worldwide popularity as a military illustrator.

PATRICE COURCELLE

Patrice Courcelle has been a professional illustrator for some 20 years. Entirely self-taught, he has illustrated many books and articles for publishers worldwide, and currently lives near the battlefield of Waterloo. His work hangs in several prestigious public and private collections. For more on Patrice, please visit his website at http://www.patricecourcelle.com/.

PETER DENNIS

Peter Dennis was born in 1950 and studied illustration at Liverpool Art College. He has since contributed to hundreds of books, predominantly on historical subjects. A keen wargamer and modelmaker, Peter is based in Nottinghamshire, UK.

RAFFAELE RUGGERI

Raffaele Ruggeri was born in Bologna. After studying at the Fine Arts Academy he worked in several areas of graphics and design before devoting himself to illustration. He has illustrated several books for Osprey, specializing in African subjects.

RAMIRO BUJEIRO

Ramiro Bujeiro has worked as a figure illustrator and strip cartoonist for clients all over Europe and the Americas. His main interests are the political and military history of Europe in the first half of the 20th century. He lives and works in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

RICHARD HOOK

Richard Hook was born in 1938 and trained at Reigate College of Art. After national service, he became a freelance illustrator, and contributed to Osprey titles for over 30 years. Sadly, Richard passed away in 2010.

RICK SCOLLINS

Rick Scollins was one of the most popular artists ever to work for Osprey. His artwork was always realistic and is highly sought after by collectors. Rick sadly passed away in 1992.

RONALD VOLSTAD

Ronald Volstad was born in 1949 in Canada. His first illustrations were published in 1970; he has since become widely known for his work in Squadron and Osprey publications, and for Dragon Models. For more on Ronald, please visit his website at http://ronvolstad.com/.

SAM EMBLETON

The son of Gerry Embleton, Sam Embleton is also a talented illustrator. They have worked together on several joint projects for Osprey. For more on Sam, please visit his website at http://www.samuel-embleton.ch/.

SIMON MCCOUAIG

Simon McCouaig is a gifted artist, specializing in modern military illustration. He has illustrated several Men-at-Arms and Elite volumes, including Elite 33: South-East Asian Special Forces.

STEPHEN ANDREW

Stephen Andrew was born in 1961 in Glasgow. An entirely self-taught artist, military history is his passion, and he has established himself as a respected illustrator in this field.

STEPHEN WALSH

Stephen Walsh has worked as a professional illustrator since 1988. In addition to his varied work for Osprey, he has illustrated a variety of books and games including Settlers of Catan. For more on Stephen, please visit his website at http://www.stephenwalshillustrations.co.uk/.

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Fosten, MAA 236 and MAA 149. (Bottom, L-R): Mike Chappell, MAA 391 and MAA 347; Raffaele Ruggeri,

MAA 492; Ronald Volstad, ELI 18.

Title page figures (L–R): Artwork by Angus McBride, MAA 154; and by Gerry Embleton, MAA 80.

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